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ALOYSIUS HORN

III

The Waters of Africa

The Life and Works of
Alfred Aloysius Horn

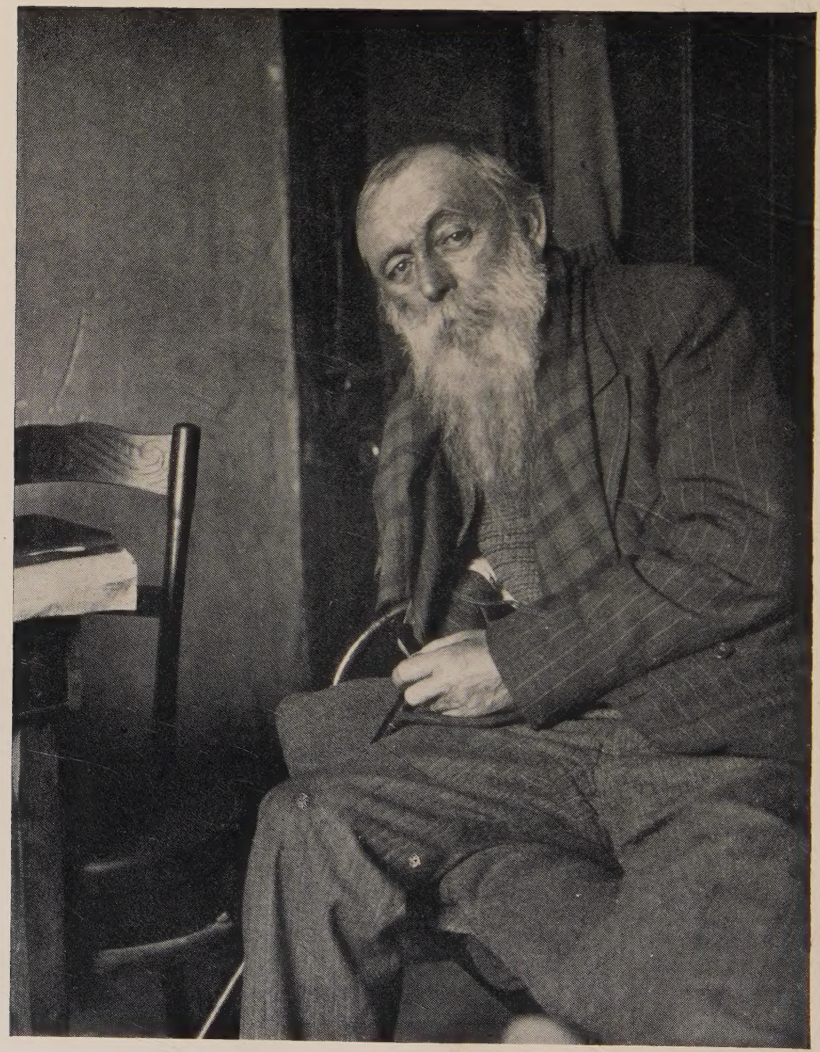
I

THE IVORY COAST IN THE EARLIES

II

HAROLD THE WEBBED

Uniform with this Volume



'Before the world of literary success got him
The old buccaneer thinks back on some strange African Scenes'

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF
ALFRED ALOYSIUS HORN

Edited by
ETHELREDA LEWIS

III

THE WATERS OF AFRICA

'He who has drunk of the waters of Africa must needs return after many days to quench his thirst thereat.'
Arab saying.

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Editorial Note

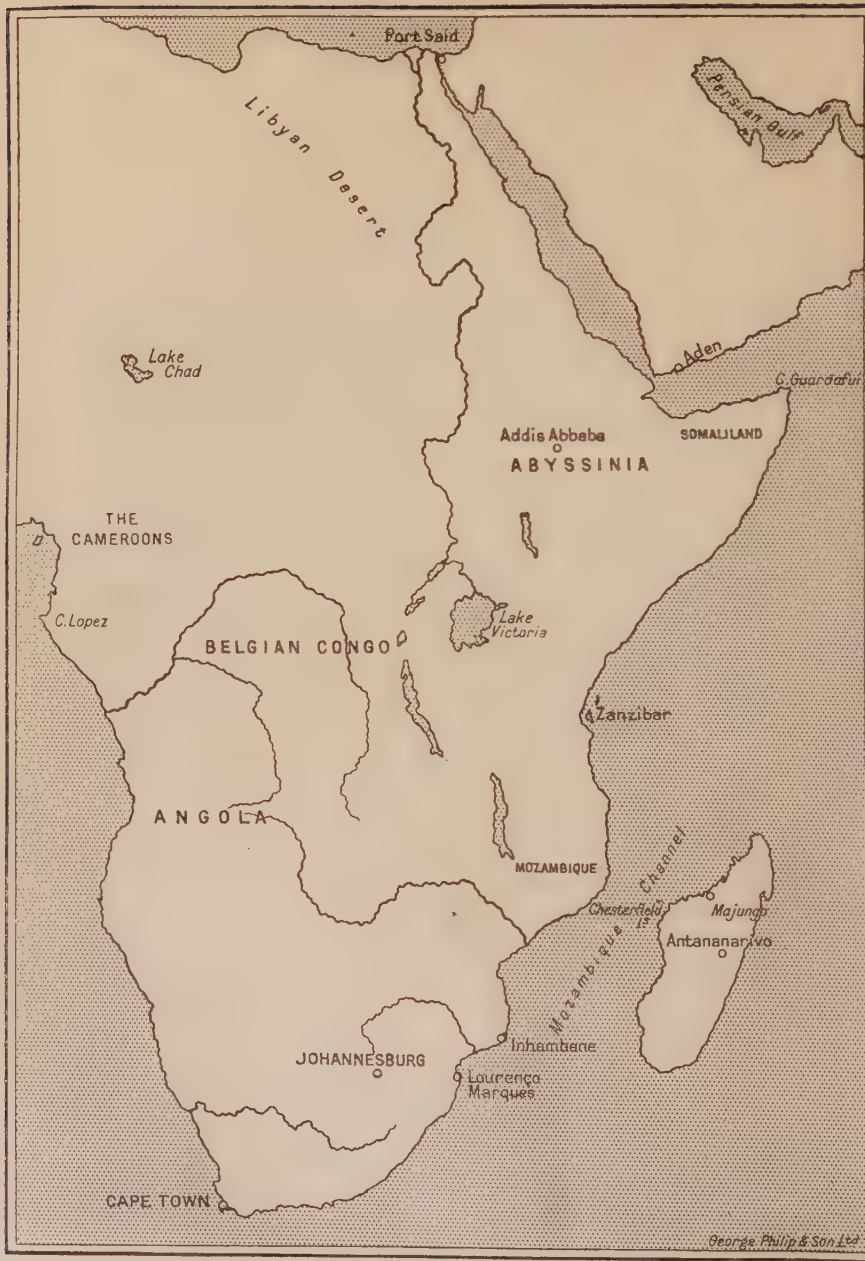
The conversations of *The Chesterfields in the Earlies* were taken down by me, and the narrative itself written by Aloysius Horn in 1926 in South Africa, almost a year before the publication of the first book in June 1927.

The *Odd Conversations* were taken down in 1927, two before and two after June of that year, but all were recorded before Mr. Horn's departure for England.

There is other material I should like to have included in this last of the series but rather than disturb the harmony of an all-African book or make the volume too long, I have left it unused.

E. L.

SOUTH AFRICA
October 1928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Prologue

'You remember me giving you some information, Ma'am, *re* the little turtles of the West Coast. Take 'em from the sea-shore inland for forty miles, put 'em on terra firma and they'll turn round religiously three times and make a line straight as a crow's flight for the sea. Urged by the edicts of nostalgia, the common lot of man and beast. A regular home bird with the genius of a pigeon for the home chimneys.

'Aye. . . .

' Well, Ma'am, to tell you the truth I'm feeling somewhat like that little feller when I find meself at the gate again after all official adieus'd been made. Only a week ago, did you say, that I wound up me viking story. . . .

'To tell you the truth I had an idea that my knowledge *re* Madagascar, etcetra, need not be lying dormant if you think there's anything'll be worth a shilling a page. So I . . .

'I could easily map out a little novel on the subject. You've only to say the word and it's go.

'And if it's truth you're wanting it could easily be alluded to *en passant*, as the French have it. Doesn't all the best fiction have to be buttressed with the truth?

Present the truth with all the airs and graces of fiction, George Bussy used to say, and let your fiction wear a semblance of the solid truth. In two words – style.

'Aye, style's the ticket. 'Tis like breeding in a human, a proper casing for the man.

'I've been feeling a bit unoccupied after getting those lads back to the Faroes. When your thoughts've been musing on Julius Cæsar and the days of natural sea power unhampered with newspaper rant engineered by a so-called League of Nations . . . League o' Sunday schools! Excuse me.

'Aye, the back-yard becomes a thought too prevalent when the brain stops working. You're bound to wear a bit o' dirty protective colouring to match your surroundings, but a feller's thoughts can take the bright colours natural to a roamer that's seen the globe in the act of spinning – not stationary in a bedroom. A top's a meagre article when not in action. And that's what's been on my mind since I polished off Julius Cæsar and those viking lads.

'Excuse me if I intrude on your private affairs, but have you thought any more of that idea of mine concerning the viking yarn? Put it into cinema action! Why, Ma'am, there's many a good old actor'd welcome the opportunity of playing the man Cæsar. Put him up on the poop there with his toga and his parchment and he'll die happy. There's no opening for the old actors nowadays. They'd like a natural bit of eloquent spec-

tacle, like the one I've conjured up. Man plus his ship, defying the ocean, is always a sight to make the gods feel somewhat sick at their surroundings. Talk of 'em keeping the art of fire to themselves! They'd not be so keenly interested in watching Prometheus playing with the matches as when they watched the first man that held a sailful o' wind. Action . . . that's what. A bit o' natural movement's worth all the firesides and furnaces envied by the gods.

'Furnaces . . . There's fellers'll stick to a place like Sheffield and call it life. Wasn't life going on before Sheffield was born or thought of? It's not where knives're made – it's where you use 'em there's life.

'Same with ships. There's more natural life down the East Coast than you'll see in a month o' Sundays on the Clyde. A feller's got to be drunk in Glasgow before he sees any visions of beauty. But once let that poor feller, tied to a hammer and a whisky bottle, get on board one of his own ships . . . Venture out a bit . . . Spread his wings to the Chesterfields and see what panoramas I've seen there and no alcohol about . . .

'Educate himself in the state secrets of Guardafui . . .

'Oh, aye. On the West Coast you get European respectability plus an overdose of squareface or quinine to meet the needs of climate. And a posse of cannibals and other tribes easy to manage as a Band of Hope.

'But when you're on the East side you're up against Mahomet himself. Talk about the mountain going to

Mahomet – it's nothing but a simple figure of speech. Meaning, one and the same thing. The biggest mountain in Africa is Mahomedanism. And England sits and looks on at the greatest obstacle to Christianity in the known world.

'Oh, aye, the Church'll send out its missionaries quick enough to play at Aunt Sally amongst a few West Coast idols. Harmless as dolls, but dear to the savage. He loves their ugly faces. No man can live without his totem, but when it comes to tackling an educated religion like the religion of Mahomet – Ma'am! It's not painted idols, it's slavery of poor lads for the harems. Been going on for a thousand o' years – and England looks the other way. One gentleman'll not give another away. Christianity and Mahomedanism 're both old firms and there's etiquette and so forth to be considered. England's not got beyond valiant warfare against totems and Aunt Sallies. Aye, she stops her ears to the cry o' those poor lads. Flesh and blood crying for deliverance . . . Losing their freedom and their manhood to play the servant to a lot o' caged women with their tears and tantrums. Taken from their kith and kin . . . a pitiful spectacle of ruined boyhood.

'Look at our lads in Lancashire. Free as gulls. Fine, laffing lads that'll never have to hide their eyes in shame . . .

'Ma'am –the East Coast! I could . . .

'There's things no lady should listen to except in a court o' law. I'll have a talk with the doctor and we'll . . . We must give a blast to Mahomet! Aye, we'll give a blast to Mahomet this time!

'What's that, Ma'am? Oh, aye, I'm not forgetting the Chesterfields. But when Christianity's at stake the beauties of Nature must surely stand aside for the nonce. Excuse me if I'm severe.

'Ma'am? I thought I'd told you about that. It's a pretty little group between Madagascar and the coast. If it's beauty you're wanting . . . Well, of *course* they're islands, what else?[1]

''Twas too much espionage on my private affairs made me acquainted with 'em. Aye, they've been a convenient getaway from time everlasting and before that. Well known to the conquering Malagash when he cast an eye over Madagascar in the earlies. Time o' William the Conqueror so-called, although he still has Lancashire to add to his crown. William the Norman, King of England and Duke o' Lancaster.

'Aye, the Malays were nosing about Madagascar in their catamarans about the time when William beached his boats at Hastings. 'Twas at Hastings I landed meself, for the Great War. Cargo o' sugar under sealed orders from New Orleans.

[1] Mr. Horn's temporary irritation was due to the fact that he had forgotten I was still in the dark as to the word 'Chesterfields' and its meaning.

'Ma'am? Well naturally a group of small islands is nature's idea of sanctuary. Especially when its not easy to run your ship between the rocks. Mainland [of Madagascar] on the one side and Mozambique Channel on the other makes some pretty intricacies in the way of currents too. But when once you know the Mozambique Channel . . .

'I've been chasing an idea for a story'd . . .

'I used to know a feller called Buck Johnson. If I say his mother was a full-blooded Pawnee, daughter to a chief in Oklahoma, it'll only increase a natural curiosity about the man. Knew a lot about Mexican dollars. They're heavier in silver than the American coin. Aye . . .

'Then there's a feller I used to know on the East Coast . . . What was his name, now . . . Nice feller – a deserter from the Queen's navy. So we'll have to change his name, when I've remembered it, for his mother's sake. Had a sweetheart working in Doulton's Pottery. Painting flowers on vases and so on. No need to hurt her feelings, poor girl.

'Stanley . . . We could call him Jack Stanley for a start. A gentlemanly name'll provide some distinction in a feller that's been a bit wild. You must avoid commonhood when it comes to hero . . .

'Well, no, Ma'am, I haven't quite clinched the matter. He *may* provide the hero's part. In that case I see I shall have to suppress the sweetheart working

at Doulton's . . . Beauty of fiction is you can suppress anything that's not convenient. Throw the high lights where camouflage is necessary.

'You see I've me heroine to think of. Belle Seymour her name. Sounds well and looks well, a name like that. Naturally she must have precedence of that girl in London. An absent person's never anything more than a visionary shadow. And it's not going to help her that she's painting flowers on pottery. She'll not stand a chance against a woman like Belle Seymour. All charms and coyness, and I'll make her the daughter of an Indian chief on the father's side. That's what she was, to tell the truth, and first cousin to Buck Johnson. A handsome half-breed that plays the guitar. She'll ride any unbroken bronco and she'll be a crack shot. And an adept, so-called, at faro.

'Aye, get *her* on board and we shall have no trouble with the story. As long as you provide the passages *re* her costume. You'll find it best to give her a yachting cap and a sailor suit. White duck dress and a dark blue sailor's collar'll be natty and suitable. Excuse my instructions, Ma'am, but I'll have to leave you to do the best you can for her. Belle Seymour's worth it![1]

'Then there's me contrast to think of. I had a notion

[1] Mr. Horn has an enviable gift of speaking as if his characters really existed. The line between truth and fiction is but a shadow line with him. He casts the net of fiction over truth and of truth over fiction, enmeshing the listener by the same dexterous throw.

of introducing Parker to the little party on board ship . . .

'Ma'am? Why, certainly there's a ship. I thought I'd told you the action takes place on the good old *Omoru*. As fine a schooner as ever slipped in and out of the Mozambique Channel. Her speed being her chief asset. Aye, you can do nothing without speed on the East side. Whether chased or chasing a useful trait in boats as in men.

'What's that, Ma'am? Oh, Parker . . . The famous Pasha Paka . . .

'Nothing but a Yorkshireman turned to Mahomet. Donned the fez for business purposes. All round about Guardafui and along the coast towards Z – was his domain. A regular monarch in Mahomet-land, to put it poetically. Oh, aye . . . Pasha Paka . . .

'Strictly Mahomedan unless he happened to smell sausages cooking in the house of a friend he could trust. Made him homesick for Huddersfield or wherever they bred the feller. Beer'd make him wistful too, although he naturally had to be more careful where alcohol was concerned. Being of a less transitory nature than pork.

'That's what makes these Mahomedan fellers so dangerous. They've got to break out somewhere Whereas prohibition in the States has made 'em break out into improving their minds in season and out to forget their sorrows, in Mahomet's countries it takes 'em somewhat different. Murder becomes a pastime

when the brain's never sweetened by the grape. Aye, and they become preoccupied with the fair sex. An Arab doesn't know the word helpmate. To a feller like him a woman's either a toy or a slave. A toy when she's new and a slave when he's tired of her.

'If the Mahomedans weren't prohibitionists from time immemorial there wouldn't be so much of this slave trade in poor lads for the harem. When a feller's under liquor he sees things *couleur de rose*, as the French say, and he'll be content with a homely wife, and one of 'em. But when he's embittered with constant sobriety a man's got to see his visions in the flesh. He'll add a wife or two to the harem, if he can afford it, same as me uncles used to lay down a fresh case o' wine in the cellar. The worst of it is, many wives means many servants in the East.

'Believe me, Ma'am, half the slavery amongst Mahomedans is due to 'em being congenital water drinkers, hence naturally cruel and suspicious. With every new wife providing a fresh source for suspicion, slavery's got to go on so that she can be provided with constant supervision.

'Never alone, the poor things . . . Why, if a Lancashire man never left his wife to have a bit o' natural peace all by herself – go out and look at the shops a bit and so on, get away from the house and the children and have a cup o' tea with her friends – England 'd be a nation of maniacs. Intrigue and suspicion flourish

where the women are caged. Ill-tempered as a caged lioness they grow that can never refresh her motherhood by leaving the babies for a bit of natural prowling and hunting.

'Talk of Englishwomen, isn't it the English governesses are teaching Turkey that a woman free's a woman happy? Plain she may be to the eye but Turkey's been listening to that little woman. Learnt more than their grammar and rule of three from her . . . Oh, aye.

'Well, Ma'am, how do my notions strike you *re* a novel about the East Coast?

East side,
West side . . .

That's what the children used to sing on the side-walk in New York. Bowery and so on.

'What with Kate Bellmore[1] and Baba Cara for dramatis personæ . . . And I'll make her take a turn at the wheel. That'll look well on the cinema. A heroine can't have too many accomplishments, especially those that please the eye.

'Ma'am? . . . Baba Cara . . . Well, I told you didn't I, he was partner to Paka Pasha. Dick Carrold his real name. One of England's worst. The navy was well rid of 'em both. Poor Jack Stanley, now, was different. He deserted naturally, from drink. No vice about it.

[1] It took Mr. Horn some time to remember his first choice of a heroine's name.

In Alexandria that was. No ill-will at all to Queen Victoria.

'But when Englishmen hide under the fez it signifies nothing but danger to the rest of the world. Red, whether of Moscow, so-called, or Mahomet, is detrimental to humanity. It inflames the savage instinct, same as it agitates a bull. Oh, aye, the Bible knows that. Avoid the scarlet woman, it says. Meaning the *demimonde*, if the truth were known. And doesn't it say "Though your sins be as scarlet" . . .

'Grand words when you get to my age. 'Twas sure one of the older church had such a notion of making sinners happy in the ultimate . . .

East side,
West side . . .

I was an innocent lad on the old West. Hatton and Cookson's wouldn't let you go far astray. And Liverpool not so far away on the map Plus that the cannibals have no ideas'll hurt a lad.

'Aye . . . But when a feller's embarked on business matters on the East Coast he's sometimes glad to think Liverpool's far away. Mahomet and Liverpool'll never be bed-fellows.

'Well, Ma'am, I'll marshal me ideas and see what I can do to please you. I don't want to have to make me apologies every time I come for a bit of sensible conversation to wash the taste o' Sunday from the mind.

Skellum[1] Zambesi do they cry? Outside my windows . . . Natives have a natural fear of whiskers. On Sundays they have leisure to indulge in it. *Skellum* Zambesi . . .

'A literary occupation brings peace to the mind. I don't seem to hear so much of me surroundings when I'm turning over a plot. *Macadoo!*[2] . . . Outside my window . . .

'Can I help it if I had to fight the Matabeles? It's Matables watch me of a Sunday. Lads that weren't born when I was fighting their fathers. But they know.

'Well, Ma'am, you'll see me next Monday. But if I get teased with the plot, I might come on Thursday. No harm in that. A discussion on literary matters surely provides a spot-light in the week.

. . . . . .

'It's only Thursday, Ma'am but I've caught on with the idea right away. Soon as I had a night's sleep.

'There was a feller below gave me a drink from a bottle he had. When I came over sleepy I saw it all worked out. Colour and action and everything else . . .

'Buck Johnson sailing in close – just arrived from Mexico. He leans over the rail in his whites – always a natty feller, Buck Johnson – and he says to me: Hullo Horn, anybody in the old place these days? And

[1] *Skellum* is the Dutch word for a rogue.

[2] *Macadoo.* I have been unable to get the meaning of this native word. – ED.

I said to him: "Not at the moment. Come in lad, and make yourself at home."

'The law of the Chesterfields is – never go alongside unless you're invited. It might be bad for you. But seeing it was only Buck I put me catamaran alongside . . .

'"'Twas a beautiful morning and the schooner sure looked an apparition of beauty, standing in between the islands . . .

'There was a lady came up from below with a very large hat and a few large feathers. Two men in white suits . . .

'One was that rascal Aderley. But I may sponge him out later if necessity arises.

'Aye, a fine schooner on a fine morning in the Chesterfields! You could see the sponges waving in the blue water. Corals, white and red, carved and fretted by Nature's handiwork into shapes o' beauty. Fishes arrowing about like mother-of-pearl . . . And there's some that are orange colour but painted with pearliness, like a soap bubble.

'It'll sure make a lovely picture. But not all motion, mind you. Sometimes you'd see a fish loitering same as humans on a sunny day. Fanning the water and thinking what he'd do next . . .

'Such a panorama, a beautifully cut schooner, all taut, and her brass sparkling in the sun. She'd got "Revenue U.S.A. No. 5" on her. Simply for safety in case of a getaway. Nothing seditious about it.

'Aye, 'twas all clear when I woke in the morning . . .

'There'll be some memorable diving scenes, too. The mate'll have been taught diving in the Royal Navy, but he's a deserter. Full complement o' guns on the boat – two sixes and two . . . No need for too much detail . . . I must find a suitable name for me diver. There's some names are no good for anything.

'Ma'am, I'll get the picture! The smell of a camel, and the harem scents for contrast! And that lonesome road along the shore to Effendi Parker's place . . .

'Thirty miles away it was. And look out for the lights put up for the barrier reef . . .

'Effendi Parker . . . There's strange citizens in the world, and the novels of to-day'll never conjure up a fresh background. The man who's apt in literature should live like a sailor – always with his nose steering towards a fresh horizon. Then go home and see it brighter for your dreams . . . And you wake up and it's ready for the pen . . .

'Aye, what you'll never see again you can sure put into words.'

The Chesterfields in the Earlies

Chapter I

For one who had made an overland passage from Antanarivo Madagascar to the Port of Majunga I felt fresh and I had thoroughly enjoyed the journey. With its beautiful changes of scenery daily and often hourly it had been something to think back on and would always be a pleasure to me. Entering Majunga I made for Johnny the Greeks a famous hotel in those days and having paid off the carriers I had my luggage stowed away in one of his best compartments which I intended to occupy during my stay, but was surprised when told the house was so crowded that I had to sleep in a room with a ship's mate a young Englishman, but was cheered to hear the proprietor say he was an old visitor and was Strictly All Right. A good shower-bath followed by a well cooked meal put me in the pink of condition. I had just finished dressing when in Walked the Mate. He was a goodlooking fellow with his smiling hazel Eye he made an immediate impression for the good the man was well dressed and contrary to the rules of the country he wore a neat peaked cap.

My name is Jack Stanley Capt mate of the *Omoru* now in the harbour. I hear you have had a long voyage Sir how do you feel after your journey, I must say

though you look fit. Fit as a fiddle Jack I said, and more so that I found a man from time-honoured Lancashire sharing the Room with me. Suppose we drink to the meeting he said, and we can talk home sweet home for a while it does one good. I agreed and answering he held up a large ice-cold Moet and Shandon and a box of cigars. We drank to the old folks at home, after which we found out I knew his home folks and he knew mine, in fact we began to feel akin. He was born in R – a town I knew well as it was only thirty miles or so not far as I told him from Frea in Lancashire. But Jack, I continued, I thought all the Stanleys lived on our side, in R – I never heard of one, of course I am a little older than you. Here Jack threw down his cap on the floor laughing heartily and quick rolling up his sleve he showed me the tattoo marks on his arm (Bill Homerod) R.N. He was well educated, had tried the banking business law and many more professions nothing suited him. The old folks began to be disheartened and when he fell in love with the girl who's Photo was now on the wall and it became known, that put the finishing touch on their efforts to try and make anything of him. He was earning nothing had neither trade nor profession whilst his best girl had just been made forewoman in a slipper factory. He had a heart talk with the Old man, bid good-buy to his folks, was given £50 for his passage to an uncle, but instead of going over to an uncle in the

U.S.A. had spent his last penny in Liverpool with the Sailors, got schooner Rigged and had joined the Navy.

He had deserted in Alexandria and after many adventures found himself in the Persian Gulf. In the Navy he had learned diving and navigation and had been in the pearling business for the last ten years, during which time he had worked in Celon Java and Arrabian Coast. And as he had told me was mate of the *Omoru*, owned by a New Zealander who had proved himself a gentleman in every way to him. The *Omoru's* Captain had made a fortune at the game and had decided to sell his schooner which the mate declared was not only built regardless of cost, but besides being a splendid sea boat was one of the fastest craft he had ever sailed in.

We left the hotel together and after walking through the busiest part of this most cosmopolitan town I was ever in, we entered a sail-makers establishment. He was a Bombay Indian and with his many Assistants all squatting cross-legged on the floor were busily sewing the canvas by hand (Jack had measured and cut the Canvas himself and after minutely examining the work done pronounced it O.K.) We left the Old Sailmakers returning through the narrow cobbled streets. The stores had opened fronts, and were occupied by Jewellers who sat crosslegged, blow pipe in hand and had plates of various kinds of rings bangles etc made by hand of solid gold. To me who was no Judge but had

seen our best work at home, had I been called on to Judge I should have given them the 1st Prize. Shops of all descriptions were passed, as well as business houses of repute, Money changers gold buyers, and in fact, all one could desire for any Purpose.

We met the British Consul A light coloured Indian, he requested us to call and see him and proffered us his services at any time. And of course we visited the Consulate frequently. Next we entered the ships dinge and were soon on board the Schooner *Omoru* from the shore she looked by far the best-looking craft in the port. The River, called the Bitsy Buga, is a very long one and drains the country around the Capital (Antannarivo) and still further south, and as it is mostly navigable for large canoes is a great boon to the country. The large cattamerans, the boats of the Mallagashes, skimmed over the river from all directions, carrying the natives with their produce to Market by far the cheapest market in the world to buy in. Turkeys chickens pigs vegetables eggs etc can be bought for a song Whilst the Hotels are supplied direct from the country. Fresh fish of various kinds were plentiful, as well as other sea food, so the hotel tables groaned with luxuries of all kinds at moderate prices. I always found Majunga a garden spot to live in under the Old Regime. (Nobody can starve in Majunga, the old saying). This was perfectly true. What a contrast between then and After the French conquest.

Aboard the *Omoru* I found everybody active: chain chipping, painting, refitting was going on beautifully. I could see he was well respected and loved by his crew. As he walked around examining he had a laugh and a kind word for them All. To those who drank he ordered extra rum from his steward, a tall young Abasynian. Those who were abstainers could order what they liked. There was cleanliness all over, which reminded one of the Navy. We now went below. The cabins were four in number, with bath and sanitary luxeries one could never expect to see. He occupied a well-lit little state-room which was in itself the most picturesque one I had ever seen most of the walls were ornamented with variegated coral or Mother of pearl forming frames for photographs and pictures of scenes he had visited. A natural born artist I said to myself. After visiting the bath etc he showed me the diving suits cleaned and repaired and hung up in rows with numbers. Next he gave me an explanation of the hand machines necessary for air-supply, tanks for holding shell, and lastly two long tom Swivel guns nearly new with boxes containing 800 rounds of Amunition, whilst the painter's locker was well supplied, Also coils of rope in fact he was ready for sea any time only for a little painting and varnishing which with her New Sails would make her the britest thing Afloat anywhere round Madagascar or the Mozambique channel.

Taking off our coats we now took a rest, and made

ourselves at home. The steward made up a good feed, whilst poor Jack the mate regaled me on his faults and misgivings. After dinner we talked more seriously. Whilst the steward, whom the mate sent ashore, returned with a basket of champaign. After a few drinks and a good smoke he handed me a letter he had received from his girl in R—. It seemed to me after reading it to be a warning to him if he did not make some effort to come home. The money he had sent her she had put to good use had a nearly furnished cottage and she had fully expected to see him following the letter. All her folks had been congratulating on her good luck and choice and then instead of appearing he had made her a laughing stock, in fact she was sick and tired of it all and would give him one more chance and no more. He took the photo down from the wall and handed it to me again. There could be no mistake that he had a good eye for beauty, but the poor fellow's faults weighed heavy on his mind. At that time he said I was nearly £2000 strong, but as bad luck would have it I took a turn for the worst and in three months I found myself stranded in Singapoer where I had the luck to meet the *Omoru*. The Captain heard my story and being in want of a Mate who understood the shell business had signed me on. Even now he wanted him to go with him to New Zealand and settle down and had promised him all the help he needed. He had £600 (hundred) pounds which the consul was keeping for him,

but as he was afraid he would go on another bender he had decided to stay with his ship, as whoever bought it was sure to be satisfied. Diving he continued was a good business and with luck from salvage thrown in was a sure road to fortune.

Jack I said, what could I buy her for. I think somewhere around 15,00 pounds would be about the lowest figure. Then I will buy her at that figure if you will sign on for another year and the sooner the better. Put her there he said, there will be no fear of my leaving you Captain, I love the *Omoru* as I love my life, and we are both Lancashire lads and I understand you perfectly. Leave all to me he continued, he will let me have the boat. He likes me and I know If I see him and explain things to him he will let you have the boat. Let us go ashore I will see him and introduce you, his name is George Armstrong. Right you are Stanley I am ready.

With another duck and dorus we slipped into the dingy. Wending his way again through the narrow streets he entered a large business Office and being conducted to the managers private room Captain Armstrong greeted us cordially I took a chair whilst Stanley asked the Skipper if he could spare a moment or two as he wished to speak to him privately. Of course William he replied, and they walked out. The Manager and I had now entered into a conversation about Madagascar and its possibilities but had scarcely entered the

discussion when The Captain and Mate returned smiling. Its Your boat Captain Horn he said shaking my hand so bidding au revoir to the agent we walked together to the consulate. I paid the money over by cheque and the Consul, after taking our signatures made out the transfer. You have the best mate seaman and diver in the World, said Capt. Armstrong and it is on his account I let her go so cheaply. You two fellows from the home country will do well and if ever you come to Little Old New Zealand call on me. My mate and I now went down to the *Omoru* where we read the new papers. Registered A 1 at Lloyds and a 200 (hundred) tonner, we had a home sweet home that was far better than an hotel. Jack paid off the boys and reengaged them, telling them they had a New Skipper, the Stewards wages we raised, as he was always on duty. After this the Mate gave them a days shore leave on pay all but the watch. They were elated. Even the two dogs were attended to After which we had our baggage transferred from the hotel, as it was much cooler aboard. We both concluded to keep away from Majunga and clear out as soon as possible. Of course I left all to him and made it a strong point never to interfere in any way. And free from all care we lived a life worth living whilst we were together.

Conversation

'You'll excuse me if I've arrived somewhat ahead of

the clock to-day. The fact is I've been feeling a bit timorous over this first chapter of mine. Best to know the worst without delay, especially in literary matters.

'Under the circumstances it'll not be quite such easy picking as what I've done before for you. A bit of natural biography like my old Ivory Coast comes easy as falling asleep. Easy as writing with one of these fountain pens – you don't have to dip, it flows from the memory. Then there was my viking lads. Nothing but a bit o' pure fiction fortified by my knowledge of Lancashire in the earlies.

'Oh, aye, English history comes in useful, however you may be placed. Same as the hornpipe, or practice in bricklaying. Or a knowledge of cooking, same as that poor feller had in the prison in Madagascar. Learnèd in sausage-making and made a living at it while waiting to be shot by the French. Oh, aye, they never told you when your turn'd be . . . Not in *that* place. Priest'd appear early some morning with the warder. " Here's the vultures ready for somebody," we'd say. A bit of a joke'll always pass things off more pleasantly for all concerned. Especially the condemned. It's well-known to be bad luck to shed tears in the face o' death. Decent fellers'll always help each other that way when *in extremis*.

'Now, Ma'am, I'll excuse you while you go inside and read this manuscript. We mustn't fritter the time. I just want to know how it strikes you. Biography's

easy, and fiction's child's play when it's got no truth to retard it. But when you're shaping fiction from fact for palatable reasons you'll have to bring somewhat more craft to bear. Knowing most of these dramatis personæ, I'm naturally finding it a little bit puzzling to make 'em ring like true fiction. I'd like to know how it strikes you. You'll have to play the part of George Bussy and be free with your advice, same as he was.

. . . . . .

'Well, Ma'am? How does it strike the imagination? You must remember this first chapter's nothing more than beginning to inspan me team. Collecting 'em from far and near – Mexico to Madagascar, so to speak. Gleaning up the path of all me wanderings. And there's good and bad amongst 'em to make it a natural vista of humanity.

'Nothing much in the way of startling episode. A common-eyed feller might call it an uneventful chapter. But he'd be forgetting the ship. The purchase of a ship has been the gateway to literary adventure from time everlasting.

'Aye, difficult to know what to do with a dry-land hero. Rake in a duel or two, find a gold mine and intrude as much love-light as there's need for – and you'll still be short of romance. With a landlubber for a hero all you can make him do when marking time is to admire the scenery. But the world'll tire of sunsets

before it'll tire of ships. Discipline and danger on the high seas'll carry many a book through yet before the judgment day. "Sail ahoy" 'll always take precedence of the cross-roads in literature. Places like Bloody Lane Ends – when I was a lad . . . They bred good hounds in that part of Lancashire though . . . Where there's only fear and a fit of the shudders it's bound soon or late to fall behind the joy of unknown sails on the horizon, for topical.

'Of course I could 'a slipped in masses of information and scenery *re* Madagascar.

'Oh, aye, . . . Madagascar . . . I used to wash for the Queen there. A beautiful island and there's no gold in the world that's finer colour. I know, because I used to wash for the Queen there. She encouraged my prospecting there. Nice woman, very partial to Catholics. She and her sister the Princess Betselao I knew better than I know you, Ma'am. Well, naturally, when I had the entry to the palace on State business etcetra and so forth . . .

'They didn't love the French any better than I did. Little fancy officers sitting down on a fine island full of minerals like Madagascar. Like a mistaken hen on barren eggs. Aye, there'd be nothing hatched while they're in possession. No natural fertility where the French are, whether of population or of prospecting.

'Why, Ma'am, it'd be a fairy paradise for the prospector if the French weren't in the landscape. *Gen-*

darme here and *gendarme* there . . . *Voila le gendarme's* always been the battle-cry of an unmartial nation. The country that depends on law'll always go to the wall. It's gentlemen, not gendarmes they want in French colonies.

'Aye, Madagascar . . . A few of our gunboats loitering off Majunga and Mahomet'd not have such easy picking down the East Coast. Where's England's support of Christianity that she could go and allow that point of strategy to the French, that've always favoured Mahomedans? Talk of *entente*! Doesn't it always come easy and natural between two nations that're both absorbed in the fair sex more than's good for a man? There's French officers there of high degree'd be unmentionable even in the millionaires' club here. Not content with befouling their own kind, they'll pull down the native women to their own level.

'Oh, aye, that's why the Society of Friends had to establish a mission there – saving the native from Parisian civilisation, so-called. From Philadelphia, U.S.A. The young feller they'd got in charge when I was there wasn't looking too cheerful. The poor lad'd never been in contact with vice before, coming straight from Philadelphia. Aye, he sure was missing his mother on Sundays. Vice may be an agreeable enough topic of conversation in a lady's drawing-room. But the real thing always provides a shock for a nice young feller like that Quaker.

'Well, Ma'am, if you think it'll do I'm gratified. Remember, there's slabs of scenery at your disposal. Fit it in where it seems natural. Literature's like carpentry, George Bussy used to say – a matter of dovetailing at the right spot.

'We could bring in that ice-cold water at the top of Ran-ma-du. (?) Water sweet and cold. The grasshoppers all got frozen there once, in a great flight thick as locusts. The natives had food for a year. Preserved in ice and very nutritious.

'Oh, aye, there's scenery and to spare. I could have put it all in, but I thought it best to allude to it gratefully and get on with the story. The first chapter's never one where you can loiter over scenery with advantage. The reader might get disappointed who's looking for signs of humanity. But believe me, Ma'am, there's scenery plus archæology in that island. Meaning, in plain English, old ruins. Great masons and builders, the ancients of Madagascar. Could make an aqueduct with any Roman emperor and less lofty talk about it. Irrigation via aqueducts was their idea of agricultural progress, and hard to beat. When this country [i.e. South Africa] begins to do a job of work, they couldn't do better than start on that. It'd keep the poor whites busier than would be agreeable to their kind. But they're bad builders. A complainer's never a worker. Send for a good Liverpool engineer and give him an army of Kafirs and trek donkeys and the work'll get

done with singing plus a smaller wages bill. Carrying water from the big rivers to the farms and the diggings . . . the feller'll do that'll be the saviour of South Africa. There'll be no factories till there's water flowing.

'Great masons, those Madagascar ancients. Look at their ancient forts – two towers and a moat and a great stone table as round as a grindstone. Giant's work, that men've forgotten how to achieve. Aye, the secret of labour's dying out since parliamentarians began talking about it. And it'll take mankind with it. These so-called labour-saving devices they're so earnest about in the States, they save time and destroy the man. A handfed bird'll not sing long. He pines for the labour Nature meant him for.

'Aye, there's history in Madagascar. "Don't camp here," my boys used to say to me. It'd be some place where their ancestors had had a fight and they were afraid of the spirits of the conquered. Far beyond the beginnings of history they'll look back. They'll need some feller more human than Carl Peters[1] to decipher it all out. He never got on with natives. He was learned in microbes and so forth. But a human document like the Rosetta stone remained a riddle to him and caused melancholia.

'There's a good deal of prospecting for the historian in Madagascar, if only the French won't think the worst of 'em and set a posse of *gendarmes* after 'em

[1] The German explorer and archæologist.

with a *procès verbal. Procès verbal* – what a rumour! The motto on the flag of the French colonies the world over, that's what.

'Nice little feller that officer, though. Fat little feller. Saw me to the jetty . . . *Monsieur le capitaine* carrying his drawn sword in one hand and the Union Jack in the other. A comical spectacle of militarism.

'Aye, we marched down to the jetty, him clearing a passage through the crowd with his sword and the little toy flag he'd found somewhere. His idea of protection.

'But kindly meant, though laffable. Aye, there's always some'll help to get their undeserving country into heaven. Fellers of universal goodness that's beyond the word flag. More nervous than I was . . .

'Excitable little feller, *monsieur le capitaine* . . .

'Aye.

'Well, Ma'am, I must be . . . What's that? Well, to tell you the truth, there's things no Englishman can suffer with dignity. And one is public espionage on a man's private affairs. When they saw me light me pipe with the *procès verbal* they got somewhat over-excited. A Frenchman's naturally short of self-control in his make-up.

'But don't forget what I say, that Madagascar'll pay the historian. Beautiful ruins . . .'

Chapter II

The news of the boat having changed owners was naturally by now well circulated. And we were not long without company. Jack Stanley was well known and he knew everyone of note. He had me well posted with all their names and characters. The list of these prominent people was a long one whilst those we had to deal with were Buck Johnson (Pawnee Butler) Bell Seymour (Cherokee Bell) both from Oklahoma U.S.A. Next came Colonel Aderly (A Texas Gambler) Paka Pasha (Jim Parker) Deserter from the Navy Wrecker pirate and slaver from Cape Gaard de fui. A man with three sides Intreague, Cunning and Cruelty. And Baba Cary (Dick Carrold) Deserter R.N., and Partner of Paka Pasha. The last two gentlemen were Englishmen. They had donned the Fez and were strict Mahomedans. Paka Pasha especially stood High in the estimation of the faithful and Drink or pork he never touched. Only behind closed doors when he visited his friends European or American whom he could confide in. Besides that he was Paramount Chief of the soil in the desert lands behind Cape Guard de fui being their Pasha through his religious influence over a few thousand dangerous marauding Arabs who infested that region.

The only two persons round the coast that Stanley knew outside the Consul and business men who were straight were Buck Johnson and Kate Belmore.[1] Buck was a dealer in money and always had Mexican Dollars for sale to any amount and this was light as all silver coins were wheighed in Madagascar. Buck was rich or ought to be as he had been at the business now a long time. Kate Bellmore worked for Major Aderley the man from Texas who was said to be very wealthy. She could play any game mostly without much fear of losing, was a champion at the wheel, and *rouge et noir*, always had a kind word and a smile and it was said she had a great love for sailors of the right kind and always played square with them. In fact she never drank liquors and was said to be a world surprise for a woman gambler, as you could not throw a stone at her character.

The rest of the women, Especially one gazell eyed light-headed Georgian beauty were a Turkish importation and generally followed Paka Pash and had charge of the musicians (or Bag pipers without bagpipes) as they played on reeds producing sometimes good music, but mostly weird shrieky and develish, The dancers were Turkish mussel dancers and suited the turks and Arabs down to a T but nobody else.

It was getting towards midnight when Ship Ahoy hit our ears. It was Buck Johnson. He came Aboard

[1] Belle Seymour.

without any to do, entered and Introducing himself said Capt Buck Johnson. We shook without more ceremony. Whilst casting his eyes around he continued how are things Stanley Dont blame you for staying here this goes any hotel ten better. I smiled, he laughed also. Anybody else coming aboard to-night. I dont know he answered she looked good to me from a shore so I thought I'd just spend a night with you boys. Right you are Buck Glad you came do you want to turn in. Plenty of room in the Skippers Cabin. Ah no Stanley We'll have a smoke and a drink I am thirsty Iv been rowing that skiff for exercise. He then devested himself of his coat and Stettson which he handed to his Malagash servant and threw himself on the cusions. The steward brought smokes and drinks we helped ourselves and I left the conversation to Stanley and Buck. Buck was a full half breed, an Indian mother who was a Pawnee chiefs daughter whilst his father was Ben Butler sheriff of Pawnee. He was white but the other crossing (?) was undoubtedly Oklahoma-born. His hair was straight and jet black his features slightly equiline his eyes dark brown. He never laughed but when he did it was an Indian laugh all over ending up generally with a slight war whoop. He had more control of his feelings than any man I ever saw. Being the firstborn he was naturally on the death of his father Chief of the Pawnees. His father Ben Buttler came from Warwick. Kate Bellmore was Bucks cousin Her

father a full blooded indian was Chief of the Cherokees The Mother Miss Buttler was Cheriff Buttlers Sister thence Buck was her cousin. The conversation which took place between the two men was all strange to me of course. But I could read between the lines that I was in a tough country and Majunga then held the record. Here the rivers of the East and west north and south met and as the Hovas who ruled the country were content with ruling the natives they took practically no notice of foreigners. The British Consul was a light coloured Indian from Lahore, and also did the necessary work for the few Americans as well and I must say that he saw well to it that the British and Americans as well as the Indians were well looked after. Gunboats called periodically, but except on rare occasions their comings and goings were well known so that slavery in young boys for harem purposes was at the full hight whilst The harems were supplied by women from turkey and Arabia many of these were white Georgians.

Their conversation was about the most interesting and important I had ever heard especially the history of wrecks which took place around us and the probabilities of salvage. Especially one, the wreck of the Ill fated *Empress of India*. She was never heard of after leaving Aden carrying a young Arabian Princess who had been betrothed to a Sultan with all her Jewells and retinue and likewise one Million of Bullion for the Cape govt. No wonder I felt proud of my purchase. Eventu-

ally Buck chuckled and said does this conversation interest you Old Sport you know this is legal for you, you aint holding up the Pacific Empress.

I must say I said it sounds good and large and theirs no telling I had always the devils own luck around Kimberley on the Diamond fields Buck and outside that I owned at one time the Smith and Palmer not far from Uma Arizona. Then you have done the States he said. Well not quite. U.S.A. is a big country Buck. Colorado San Juan (Pronounced the San Uan) Valley, Indian Territory, Texas Georgia, I know fairly well. This was a big surprise to Buck. Were you ever in Pawnee he said. Oh Yes I answered All the Old Sighns in Pawnee are my handy work besides that I built a few Chimneys &c. I knew some good folks in Pawnee, that of course is a few years ago I went through with the first Railway and Buck was astonished. Did you know the Buttlers he said. Chief Buttler was a tall gentleman his wife was a Pawnee I did some work for him also painted a small Sighn in black and gold (Cheriffs Office) Mr Buttler was from Warwickshire in England he told me, and he was the Cheriff of Pawnee at that time. I was in the Sheriffs office when the news came that Oil had been struck at Taniaha (?) and saddled up immediately as I wanted to be in the Oil rush. But I had to leave Tanniahe in a hurry. The new town was full of gambling Joints whilst I was in the large one near the station it was rushed by a Sheriffs

posse. I escaped down my ladder I had for painting and another fellow followed me with the money he had raked up from the table. The Shooting was soon over but was lovely whilst it lasted. The man who came down my ladder mounted one of the sheriffs ponies and dug out like a Streak. As I should surely have been subpœnaed as a witness and knew well witnesses dont live long in Indian Territory I also dug out that night. Buck laughed heartily shook my hand with an Indians grip and said, And here we meet again.

Conversation

'I'm a bit late this morning owing to a pilgrimage to get me medically unfit card. Can't get help from the Charity Society unless you show it. And from there they turned me into some other office. Go and see Mr. So-and-so! Oh but the gentleman's engaged! Please wait a minute . . . Oh, aye, wait a minute that creeps into an hour, then take off your hat and act humble to the gentleman. Tell him if you've got any unmentionable diseases and he'll make a list of 'em for the lady typewriter to take down. Is that a way to treat any gentleman, let alone a man?

'Mind you, she was bossy about it. The fair sex are more bossy than blushing these days. I heard him say "Better allow scant rations. He can get about selling things anyway."

'In England they're not so hard on old age plus a

thin purse. Oh, aye, England . . . You can go without breaking stones or anything else ten miles from one town to another and get a bed or a meal at once and no questions asked nor insults offered. They'll smile at you and show you the barn . . .

'In the States, too, you're not made to wince by some common, clurkish feller set up on an office stool to judge his betters. I may be medically unfit in purse and person but I haven't reached the disgrace of such a mental outlook as these fellers face the world with.

'I've never seen such a cruel race as this in South Africa. Can't even speak to them in good English but they think you're mad. Isn't my speech good enough for a man like Lord Derby? Doesn't he speak broad Lancashire just like an English gentleman when he needs a bit of relaxation from State affairs?

'These offices . . . Here I've got to defile my mother tongue with a Dutch accent and pretend I'm an illiterate before ever they'll listen. Ma'am, you're speaking to something signifying nothing when you open your mouth to such fellers. But it's like the army – you've got to lie low in your skin and let the sergeant be the ruling god *pro tem.*

'Aye, but when you're educated it means you can sit down in the midst of black poverty and have a good laff. And the worst's not come when you can share a coin or a crust with another feller . . . To tell you the truth I used me literary earnings rather too freely at

the beginning of the week. Force of circumstances induced me to give something to that feller in the bed next to mine. Been here for a week without getting a job or earning a penny. Getting that frightened look in his eye – I've seen it in cornered animals.

'But it does you good to give for a change from selling me wire and suffering upstart charity from the ill-educated. Now that I've got a flame of me own burning, there's never a visitor in that room goes wistful for a cup o' tea. Call it me literary light if you like – 'twas lit with me literary earnings.

'Ma'am – as human being, you don't display much of the gentleman if you refuse your last cent to a starving man made in the same image as yourself. 'Twas a good enough outfit for the great Onlooker . . . He took the image of a man to see what it felt like.

'Oh, aye, a man, not a rabbi. A feller with tools and an apron, like me painting signs or building mashtubs. That's why they crucified Him. When the poor speak wisdom the rich'll always tremble. The wisdom of Nature'll always provide a shock for the educated.

'Well, Ma'am, I've been marshalling my personæ together for a try-out at pearl fishing off the Chesterfields. Provides a picturesque opportunity to describe how we collect mother-of-pearl for the market. But the real reason I'm taking 'em over is to get 'em used to the diving suits they'll need off Cape Guardafui. 'Twould never do to run them up to Guardafui and expect

amateurs to join in salvage work by instinct, same as they would in these cinema yarns. No man imbibes a knowledge of the diving suit with his mother's milk. Every action must be led up to by a natural gradient, George Bussy says. That's why we're using the Chesterfields. Forms an agreeable focussing point for me characters plus the necessary instruction in diving plus the grand panorama of scenery.

'Talk of blue water! Talk of the coral beds and the fishes swimming about like pearls for colour . . . You can help me with that bit. You'll do it better than I shall when once I've described it to you. Naturally I shall be kept fully occupied with the action. You know what's expected of the sea's bed in the way of spectacles. In the tropics, too. But you'll never see it finer than you'll see it off the Chesterfields.

'Well, Ma'am, here you are . . . I'll be lighting me pipe while you're inside reading it.

. . . . . .

'That tot the doctor left me teetotally revived me. I've been brandy-dry for some days, what with one drawback and another.

'Well, you see I'm mustering me troops ready for action. Literature's an easy matter when you've seen life. Look at Buck Johnson – a natural born character for a book, if ever there was one. Owing to the fact that Mexican dollars're heavier than the American coin . . .

'Aye, being a keen observer he'd noticed the phenomenon and made a good living out of it without hurting anybody's feelings in the matter. You just have to re-mould them into the American coin and there's quite a nice little residue of surface silver to dispose of at a profit on the mainland . . . It could always be weighed there . . . Indian merchants . . .

'Aye, the Chesterfields . . . A lovely little group. There was a cave there where Buck Johnson . . .

'It had its exits and its entrances, as Shakespeare says – and Buck knew every one of them as well as he knew the back of his hand.

'That feller loved roughing it as much as I did. Aye, but he wasn't the first feller to use that cave. Not by a few centuries or so. Who made those niches in the walls? Tell me that! Who smoothed off the edges o' that stone seat made in the rock – smooth and soft as if the sheep'd been rubbing against it. Like they do in Lancashire, where there's rocks in the fields from geological times. Some say they're stones the Druids used for religious purposes of slaughter. Nothing to do with geology.

'Or it might 'a been the early Malagashes used it for a natural getaway. Or the Phoenicians – they knew the East side well. Always taking a step further, those fellers. Couldn't avoid the temptation of seeing what's round the corner. My notion is that if they could get as far as Wales for a bit of tinware it'ud not take much

more determination to do some research down the East Coast for the greater metals.

'Aye, but there's cruel rocks on that side of the islands. If you didn't know the currents and follow a circuitous circle or two . . .

'Buck knew the course well.

'Many a wreck lying off the Chesterfields. That's why the cave was so secluded. Difficult to get at being hung in the face of the cliff. But somebody in former times'd made a sheep track that led to it. Steep as a house it was. Cut out of the rock in some places and all overgrown with verdure. But I'll make the path a bit easier so that I can introduce the Malagasy palanquin. For literary purposes you've got to be more spectacular than the truth always allows.

'But there's history on the East Coast! And the feller that opened it out to the modern world was Disraeli – so-called Lord Beaconsfield. Oh, aye, he did that, but Lancashire never cared for the Jew. Gentry like Lord Derby remained cold to him. He had too much hobnob with the Queen and the *élite* didn't care about it. A masterful nature with the fair sex'll never be popular with men of prowess.

'But that capture of the Suez canal was a masterstroke for the prestige of England. A Jew's always got his eye on the horizon. That's why he doesn't make a good citizen. From Abraham onwards he's got the thirst for new lands. Oh, aye. And if he'd been a good

seaman he'd be ruling the world. But that he'll never be. Jehovah spoilt him once when he let him through the Red sea on foot and he's never cared for ships since. Always looking for roads and bridges made by other fellers.

'Aye, Israel's a bad seaman and that's a benefit to the world at large. Save and except the poor old *Alabama*. She'd never have lost that duel if the captain hadn't had a streak of Jewish blood in him. Stratagem minus the cutlass was what gave her the death blow. Lash and parry'd 'a saved her . . . Aye, built in Liverpool . . .

'No, that feller Disraeli was never a favourite with men. Whatever he did for England never bought him any affection. Any man, to make good, must follow the laws of Nature and have a bit of prowess about him. 'Tis when civilisation makes prowess an unnecessary article that mischief creeps in. Divorce, and other fancy results of a man having no fighting to do . . .

'Politics was never enough. How can a woman respect a man when she sees no prowess? Load her with money-bags and it'll not keep her like prowess. The only bit o' civilisation worth keeping. And the women know it by instinct. Oh, aye, the women'll lead us back to prowess in the ultimate end. Wisdom drives 'em, and the race calling for survival.

'Wait till I get up to Guardafui – we'll have to offer a word of thanks then to Disraeli for providing a scene

of action within easy reach of Liverpool salvage men. Gratitude where gratitude's due is one o' the few lessons civilisation's taught us.

'Guardafui . . . 'Tis just thereabouts we used to see the handsome Georgian women. Up at Aden, too. I'm bringing one in for effect. In other words, a foil for Belle Seymour, even if she never says a word.

'Those Georgians've less need for speech than most. You'd as soon expect a gazelle to offer a remark.

'Come to beauty as such, the most magnificent dark-eyed beauty I ever saw was a Georgian woman at Aden. Belonged to a big Mahomedan with a dyed beard and near as tall as he was. Never took his eyes off her except to see what sensation she was providing amongst his own sex. She couldn't stretch her hand out to any jewels and silks and fallals in the shops but what he'd stride in and seize it for her. Money poured out of him – and a great crowd following him and watching him deck the woman.

'Unveiled she was for show in the streets. Of course she'd be veiled again as soon as they would be out of the town on the way home. But it was no more than nature for that woman's beauty to be exhibited when opportunity offered. Same as the opera in London, it affords the pride of both sexes a little healthy relaxation.'

Chapter III

At that moment our conversation was cut short by the whatch. Ship ahoi, Baba Cara the Mahomedan had arrived. He dismissed his boat hastily and came in without cerimony, I was introduced to him and he took off his Fez and donning a peak cap sat down and said in pure English what have you got good boys I am as dry as a smoked herring. The steward attended to his want and we all drank to his luck. Johnson and I feeling drowsy now spoke of retiring but the newcommer would not hear of it. He had two letters from home and these he handed to his confident Stanley saying read them loud Jack so I am sure to hear all. The eldest daughter had written them. Mother is quite well, and I have passed first class at the Lambeth School of Art and have a Steady Job at the Old Lambeth pottery, Daultons, My wages are £2 a week and shall get a rise every year, Martha (the youngest daughter) is working at a milliners in Oxford St and will soon also have a rise in her wages. We are still in the Old Curiosity shop at the Corner of New Cut and Millers lane and the shop pays well, we all are dying for you to come home, we will take care of you. Mother saves all the money you send and look how happy you could

be in Old London at home once more, we always pray that you are coming, and mother always says she knows you will take us by Surprise. The letters were most affectionate. Buck and I now retired sleepy and left the mate and his friend. We turned in with ports open and rocked to sleep by the cool breeze from the sea we slept soundly till we were awakened for morning coffee.

We ordered breakfast for ten o'clock and again went off into the sweet lands and visions of long ago. A Good salt Water Shower and Breakfast Whilst the mate and his friend still slept soundly. We both took a walk on shore. Visited the Malagash market and the Walker house (?) where buck was told his silver had arrived. We next visited the sail-makers who said he would be ready by noon and we next dropped into Johnny the Greeks there I was introduced to Aderley. He was a tall fine looking fellow speclessly groomed. A thorough business man of about 37 or 40. He was busy giving orders to the attendants of his gambling resort, which was certainly well arranged and furnished regardless of cost. We promised to give him a look in later. The Turkish portion was extremely deserted. The Bar at the end of the underground dive was well arranged and attended and was deliciously cool. We had our morning wet and returned on board, where we found the Mate and crew busily getting ready to dress the *Omoru* up in her new sails ready for the try out next day.

The new canvas was on board and she was soon dressed up ready at any time, blocks had been overhauled and she was looking her best. We amused ourselves listening to buck playing the guitar, he could nearly make one talk, Whilst Stanley was no mean performer on the voilin.

It was nearly sunset when we decided to go ashore and as it was an old custom, invited our friends to accompany us. We had decided to sail early so as to catch the morning land breeze. Of course we visited the Consuls and agents first but they were all too busy to take a days holiday. We next visited Johnny the Greeks where we found the gambling hall in full swing I had my first look at Cherokee Belle, she was as buisy as a be. I was duly introduced. Well Cap you look like a sailor she said, smiling. She was the perfection of beauty, but I could discover no trait of Indian in her. She was a full white with a ruddy complexion, her hair was light auburn, large brown eyes. Now and then she spoke kindly to a loser whilst those who won also received a whitty remark and a smile. I played in good luck and so did Jack Stanley. Buck had a short conversation with her in Indian and Spanish this I understood fairly well. I heard her tell Buck she would not miss the sail for all she could see. Aderley of course excused himself on account of business calls. He was busy Playing poker. We next visited the Turkish mustle dancers I was introduced to Pasha Paka whom

I noticed eyed me keanly. He spoke to Stanley in Arabic and I turned to watch the Musicians and Mustle Dancers, who were weird and wonderful. The visiting Mahomedans were mostly sons of the desert, all wore ominous looking daggers in their belts, and drank sherbert or other soft drinks of the country. The Georgian beauty came in and was soon carrying beverages to the Mosselmin of higher rank, she was surely good looking in every respect, but to me, as regards beauty Belle Seymore certainly had it both in grace and features. The Mate and I returned on board, Buck promising to be on board with Miss Seymore before sunrise.

All had just turned in when we were roused from our slumbers by Baba Kara, who drank copiously he did not stay long as he had business on shore. He was getting his dow ready for the Chesterfields but would see us again on board after the try out. After he had departed Stanley showed me a small map drawing of two wrecks given him by Baba Kara, who stated that the two vessels, one a steamer the other a full rigged ship had been sunk off Cape Guardafui by Pasha Paka who had raised a dummy ship on the flat sands of the desert at night time, shaking the sails of the dummy ship which was raised mechanically on the approach of coast bound ships, who's crew seeing the distress rockets had gone to the Dummies Assistance. As it was Impossible to tell the flat shore from the sea the dummy

had caused many wrecks and he[1] personally had been there on these two occasions. The names of either the sailer or the steamer ship he did not know but the maps were accurate.

The Steamer Stanley thought was the *Empress of India* but we should find out all if we visited the spot, as he was homesick he thought if he helped the British Govt to locate the Wrecker he stood a good chance of being pardoned for deserting the navy. I laughed heartily when he said Of course Capt I shall persuade them all I can to hurry up, as of course that is what I have been waiting for. A chance to come clean with the Navy. Anyhow you can leave it all to me and mean while we can study it over as two heads are always better than one. We shook and retired.

Conversation

'It's coming clear now. What you can't think of overnight has a way of arranging itself gratis when you wake in the morning. Night thoughts never led anywhere but to the realms of Morpheus. All right for poets, so called, but a brisk narrative'll come easier when the sun's up.

'Oh, aye, especially when you're getting old. The sun's full of illusions whereby you're disposed to dream of the past. What does a dog lie in the sun for? Not

[1] Baba Kara.

just to warm his bones, it stimulates the memory and you'll see his legs twitching for a run. People call it dreams but a dog never has such dreams when he's cold. A good coal fire'll have the same influence, a fact not understood in the Middle Ages. The fumes from a coal fire were thought to be poisonous in the days of Edward the First. The lord of the manor could dig for coal on his own property. His yeomen had the same privilege. But the poor were forbidden by law to light a coal fire in their houses. The trouble was, no ventilation. Same as these poor native lads'll kill themselves in the winter here for the sake of a paraffin tin of coal in their rooms and no ventilation.

'You've read it, now, Ma'am? You'll notice I'm clarifying me characters now. Of course it means a little natural manipulation. No need to gloss over a feller like Colonel Aderley. Poor sort though he was, it may be necessary before we're finished with him to let Belle Seymour shoot him for the good of humanity. She was a crack shot and there's no need why her talent should be hidden. A girl like that . why, it'd be nothing if she split the thin end of a lariat in action! When you're born with a revolver under your mother's pillow it'll come easy as a needle to a lady's hands.

'Oh, aye, I'm wasting no pity on Colonel Aderley. Bringing a girl like Belle Seymour all the way from Oklahoma to add an attraction to his gambling saloon

in Majunga. Exposing her to the eyes of Mahomedan traders used to the veil. If she wasn't an Indian with pure instincts her character'd 'a been ruined in a place like that. Aye, the Indians have the instinct for purity, left over to them from savagery. Civilisation can't touch it. What's more the Government can't steal it, like it steals oil fields for a few dollars a month rent. Same as this Government, so called, 'll entice the natives off a bit of land that's got diamonds on it. Government! The holy churches'll do it, let alone government. Oh, aye, when you see church property added to by a farm here and there you may be sure there's more than mealies growing there. Somebody's seen the rabbits keeping warm on a winter morning over the neighbourhood of a diamond pipe, and gone and told the minister. These pastors and predikants are no more than human. Keeping a sanctorium for a living'll not debar the business instinct from doing its duty. Aye, you'll not keep bulls and bears from entering holy ground.

'Come to that, I've heard of a bull in a vestry, if not exactly in the church. An unusual spectacle. The lads at P – drove the bull in on a Monday and after feeding it expensively all the week it couldn't be extricated by the same door on Saturday when the verger appeared for cleaning purposes.

'Boys'll be boys when all the churches are dust and ashes. Nature'll be top dog in the end. And that's

something that goes deeper than the top dressing of religious sanctimony.

'In the Older Church it's somewhat different. She'll be top dog in the ultimate because she's always allowed for Nature. Boy or man, she knows religion's got to walk abreast with the dictates of nature. What's the confessional for but to keep the balance true? Come to that, isn't the Virgin held aloft so that the world can't forget she was the Mother of a Lad? Aye, and lads'll stray . . . Didn't He give his parents trouble and despair when He strayed back to Jerusalem? Obeying the dictates of a natural curiosity, same as when we went bird nesting when they thought we were in church, "Look at your boots" they'd say, "where have you been?"

"Twas Nature called Him to disobedience, same as it called us. Wasn't it Nature called Him to hobnob with the fishing boats on a Sunday when He should have been elsewhere? "Look for your friends amongst the poor" He says . . . Aye, and He listened to Nature when He turned water into good wine for the wedding guests. That's always been somewhat of a twister for the prohibitionists. But they'll acrobat over any obstacle in the pursuit of temperance so called.

'Well, Ma'am you're getting acquainted with me characters. All hands on board before long, good, bad and indifferent.

'Of course! there's that feller Buck Johnson . . .

I'll give him a better character for the book. It'll look better than too much reality, come to a printed book. But I can square it up by loading Colonel Aderley with more vice than he was the man for. Poor sort o' feller in real life. Too interested in money to be much of a chancer.

'Aye, in those days Madagascar afforded opportunity for all. Especially if you were a natural enemy of the French. The Queen was a good woman with a severe antipathy to the Latin races that made her easy to get on with.

'There was a market round the Queen's gold mines. Native miners giving their portion of gold to the Queen . . . and the dancers dancing there . . . One o' the spectacles of life it's best not to forget. Malagasy dancers, like Shakespeare for beauty. A poet goes with them and a musician . . .

'A classic sight and no mistake! An ancient race and happy till the French made havoc of their customs. Full o' legends and learning as Mexico. And what's more, *it's the same*! Haven't I told you, Ma'am, that their totem poles have got the same marks on 'em? The three birds and peculiar writing, same as I've seen in Mexico. Bonded stones, same as Zimbabwe and Georgetown.[1] Fine skull, like that feller we found walled up in a gold mine.[2] Black hair just the same.

[1] West Coast of Africa.

[2] See Volume I, the discovery in Rhodesia of an ancient skeleton having a fine type of skull and black hair like to Malagasies.

Ma'am, the Malagasy is blood brother to the Mexican Indian. And if Mexico, he'd embrace Peru.

'Oh, aye, the Malay! The unsung viking of the southern seas, that's what. Look at the legends! That legend of the Bleeding Vine, isn't it the very image of Indian mythology? A lake in Madagascar, where there's a vine growing with its roots in the water. A princess drowned herself there for love and once a year the vine drops blood. So the natives say . . .

'A fine, mythical people. That's why the French don't understand them. Any more than they'd settle in Lancashire without spoiling the country-side. Always pacifying the natives by martial methods. Do they ever make a new road that's not meant first and last for getting guns and troops along easy? Some so-called expedition of pacification.

'A gentle, kind people, the Malagasies. With natives like that no need for military roads. Aye, in the hands of the English those roads'd have been laid for commerce. [1]*Ikorna* pacification! Commerce is the greatest pacifier in the known world. Beats military occupation hollow for soothing the natives. Teach 'em to play with scales and moneybags and they'll eat out of your hand. Teach 'em to play with a pickaxe and save your army powder for blasting out good minerals. Talk about Germany being the great military nation! 'Twas only when they were under the rule of a Bedlam feller. The

[1] A native African word expressing scornful disbelief.

Lord made the French in the semblance of a box o' tin soldiers. Handsome but hollow. And that's what they've been ever since. But they'll get lost or mislaid in time, when He's finished playing with them.

'I told you the British could 'a had that island. Oh, aye, the French got tied up one time with their heavy responsibilities and signalled for help. "Would you like this island" they said "in exchange for something easier you may have about you?" Couldn't manage so many pacification expeditions. But being a moment of *entente*, the English said they couldn't think of it, but they'd send over and help them.

'That word's the biggest known stumbling block to world peace. While Britain waves *entente* everywhere instead o' seizing what she can hold and be done with it, there'll be trouble everywhere.

'A naval base of ours on Madagascar and we could surprise the world with its mineral wealth. Aye, there'd be peace then for the prospectors.

'There'll never be security for any of England's possessions until this *entente* furore is stopped. Why they're scrapping the navy at the dictates of a French word! What's the League of Nations but a factory for *entente*? And what's *entente* but a forced conviviality? No better than a glass o' wine and a finger biscuit at a funeral.

'Well, we shall be bowling along to the Chesterfields in the next chapter, all being well. A fine group . . .

Any amount o' getaways amongst those islands. And a grand look-out for vessels, whether in distress or any other trouble. Aye . . . you jot down the points so that I'll not forget them. They're clear as pictures in my mind to-day but who knows where they'll be to-morrow?

'There's that cave, for example. Better call it a grotto for picturesqueness. And that's what it was, to be correct. Just a cool, spacious grotto, clean as the winds and high up from the sea. Always airy . 'Twas ventilated and cooled by the shaft where a little cascade fell down from the top to the bottom of the cliff. Stick your head in the shaft and look up at a certain time o' day and you'll meet the eye of the sun through a small hole at the top of the funnel. You'll see it through the prismatic spray of the falling water. Jot that down – prismatic spray. I could 'a said rainbow tints but there's more commonhood in that. For the matter o' that, turning the water into wine's a good way to express it. Look down the shaft and the water'll be nothing but water losing itself in the darkness. Must 'a worn itself a funnel clear down to the sea below . . . A lovely little cascade, passing through like yards o' ribbon. Always moving and breathing and keeping you company. Aye, and with a different song every hour of the day, to those with ears. The variability of Nature's one o' the seven wonders of Christendom. And there it falls still, same as a thousand years ago. Beauty with none to see it . . .

'I could take you there, Ma'am! You certainly ought to see the Chesterfields. They're quite close if you'd only think so. Why, sometimes I wake up and think I'm in that cave with the little cascade in me ears . . . Not so far away as the crow flies . . .

'Ma'am, it's not distance, it's destiny and the fellers you meet'll separate you from agreeable scenes. What the Arabs call Kismet. And you can't retrace your steps. Not when the morass has got you . . .

'A beautiful group. Home of the pirates for many a generation. Aye, everywhere there you'll meet the sunshine life . . .

'Ma'am, I'll be going now. Do your best to catch the colours. They elude me somewhat when it comes to writing them down, but you're younger than me.

'That little cascade . . . A veritable fairy grot, that's what. The vision gets lost when I come near paper. Aye, when I've talked it out I get tired . . .

'Excuse me returning for a moment, but for a foil to Belle Seymour I'm going to usher in one o' those soft, milk-drinking Georgians. Fed on milk to make her pretty. That'll throw into relief the bronco-riding Indian girl. Hard as a young tree, *plus* champion faro thrower. It'll sure make an original contrast. Look to your foils, George Bussy used to say. And there's no greater contrast than the Western woman and the woman of the harems. 'Tis the difference between

champagne and sherbet. The Eastern woman only appeals to the senses, but the Western girl flies to the brain, so-called the seat of the intellect, and inspires a man to action.'

Chapter iv

We were up and buisy by first day dawn, Decks were cleaned down new awnings spread whilst the dainty single cabin which was at the disposal of Miss Seymour was the essence of cleanliness and All was now ready for our visitor who true to promise came aboard bringing a Spanish guitar and two portmanteaus and a dainty Parrasol. The advent of this smiling fairy for so she looked put every body in good humour. Even dancing *Omoru* seemed to catch on to what was required of her and sprang to it immediately and under the new canvas sailed along like a giant sea bird. I took the wheel and was joined by Miss Seymour, who laughingly asked me if I would let her steer awhile as she felt sure she could manage all right. And after a few minutes tuition I left her at it. She enjoyed this immensely but the mate seeing her working so hard came to her assistance and showed her how to manage the wheel without effort. Let it spin and then bring it to and it is easy work. I took a deck chair and drew up beside Johnson who sent for the guitar and proposed the Bell of Tennessee I sang second and as he was one of the best players I ever heard the music sounded well, at least to the Mate and Belle Seymour who kept crying for

more, so we kept the music up for quite a time. Keeping our throughts wet once in a while. Dinner was served without any ceremony, Belle leaving the wheel helped us once in a while with dainties. We now had a sand dance after which Stanley and I gave several Lancashire breakdowns. After which Belle gave a stave or two of the Old Spanish fandango. At 12 o'clock by the sun Jack took our bearings, we had made record time and decided to turn home. We now crowded every stick of Canvas on her that he thought might fall in love with the wind and we sailed home in long tacks cutting into it like a blue shark. This was highly amusing to Belle up hill and down on the swells she [the *Omoru*] would gently lay over without strain or effort and straightening up easily would course like a greyhound down the field sea-inclines, laying over gently in the valleys and cutting through without effort rose plumb on the swell. The motion was highly exhilarating and especially so to Buck and Miss Seymore.

We tacked into Majunga and came to our old anchorage about half an hour before sundown. I felt fully satisfied with the *Omoru* and so did my mate. As for Johnson and his half Indian cousin they had more than enjoyed the trip. Belle declared she must come with us for a months trip to the Chesterfields she had been promised a months holiday many a time by Aderley and she would just get ready and be on board by the time we were ready to set sail in the morning.

Sailing on a boat like the *Omoru* was better then bronco riding, so she had made up her mind. If we were willing to take her she was coming with us, and we were more than willing Whilst the mate seeing that she was such a good sailor would make her a first class diver. That was just what she was longing for, to look at the sea bed which she had been told was wonderfully beautiful.

Our two American friends now left us and we promised to give them a call that evening. We had thoroughly enjoyed their company. They had not gone but a little while when Baba Kara stepped on board, he was quite excited, and said he had had a meeting with the Pasha who swore he was still more than £500 short in his accounts and as this was holy money due to the Sultan he had warned him to pay up before the Rammadan,[1] or he would denounce him in Zanzibar and of course he knew what that meant (ruin and even death). We jollied him up and offered to do all we could for him. Well Lads he said I can put a big fortune in your way only clear me first, I am not safe here with this Man Devil close to, in fact something has got to be done and done quickly. We told him we would see the Consul but would mention no names till we knew exactly how the matter stood. This satisfied the Old Man, and a few good talks put him in a better humor. We now Dressed and leaving him in

[1] Mahomedan Festival.

charge of the *Omoru* we went directly to the Consuls carrying the maps of the wrecks with us. The Consul was more than pleased to see us I was appointed spokesman and explained to him the reason of our visit. I could see he was both pensive and excited at the news especially with the map of the two Recks. These he took a careful look at then extended his arm in excitement. This steamer without doubt is the ill-fated *Empress of India*. She carried a hundred and fifty thousand in gold for South Africa and likewise the jewels and precious pearls etc of the poor Persian Princess and her retinue. I will give you a guarantee of a full pardon for the two R N men who you say you know and they will not only receive a pardon but a reward. I have here an offer from our government of ten thousand pounds sterling reward for the ringleader of these wreckers who were concerned in this most sickening and appalling outrage, and taking a paper from a pidgeon hole he read to us ten thousand pounds sterling will be given etc, thus verifying his previous statement.

Meanwhile I reminded him of his promise of secrecy and he reminded us he was H M S Consular representative and could not break his word with us in fact we could rely on him with the same faith we could in a confessional. He made out the two papers of pardon and handed them to me. They only remained to be signed. Jack Stanley signed one immediately, he then left saying he would be back with the other paper duly

signed in less than an hour. I waited chatting to the Elated Consul. He was not gone long when he returned with the other one signed by Baba Kara and the Consul now drew up two separate letters stamped them and handed them to Stanley. We then left him in high glee and he asked me if I could pay him a visit in the morning early it was most important that I should do so and I would be well paid from now on not only for my personal services but the use of the *Omoru* and any other reasonable charges which he would see were satisfactory. My visit he would never forget as it was the most important one which had occurred during his consulate. I of course promised to be there next morning early. We bade him Adieu and walked to Johnny the Greeks more than satisfied with recent occurrences. Stanley had in his pocket what he had longed for for years, and congratulated himself on his luck in meeting me. I felt exactly the same feeling of luck in meeting him, anyway he was as free as a bird again and as for myself I would have a go at that salvage and ten thousand if I had to dive to Hades for it. This was just how we both felt. Things were looking good all round.

On entering the gambling hall we found things humming. Cherokee Belle all smiles was doing great business, we both played in wonderful luck and that pleased Belle to the nines. As we left she said tomorrow boys for sure. On board the *Omoru* we met

Old Baba Kara he was in his cups and was sitting smiling with a Sowwester and a rain coat. He was all smiles and a good feed of ham and eggs brought him to. Do you know lads he said I was thinking of you boys staying a month or so with me in good old London. I want you to write to-night to my Old Dutch (his wife) and kiddies and tell them I'm coming. Post it yourself Stanley and see it gets there OK. After supper was over the letters were written and read to him he was so delighted with the turn things had taken he fell fast asleep, as I had to be up early I left Stanley with him and turned in. No other visitors visited us that night so I had a good rest. Coffee waked me in the early morning and as the decks were being washed I took a good shower under the hose. I dressed took a feed and leaving the mate, who knew well where I was bound for, I hurried to the consulate. He also had been an early riser that morning, he knew that I was bound for the Chesterfields that day where I was to meet Baba Kara and also explained to him who were my passengers. He told me to go a head he would advise me what to do later as he expected a naval visitor of High rank. The rest of my instructions were not to leave the Chesterfields till advised and above all to keep a good eye on Old Baba. I shook hands with him and after a few more words I left him.

The Old Town of Majunga was still half asleep when I put off but I noticed a boat alongside the

schooner. It was buck with his luggage and 21 small cases of Mexican silver pesos. He had brought along with him quite a lot of luggage and I smiled when I saw the old guitar. He was not through with his business as yet. Belle was coming and would be on board by about 10 am as she had some shopping to do. Baba Kara was on shore he said and was nearly reddy to sail in his small Arab Dow, as he had told Buck he had a big head and good news and wanted to clear Majunga before the folks were astir.

The agent Buck said would send our supplies along with his and had sent his folks to the market for fowls, Ducks etc, besides that he had engaged 10 more Malagash divers of repute and those with their catermarans would reach the Chesterfields pretty nearly as soon as we did. We were all ready to sail now at any time, we sent the home letters by Bucks boat. And at ten Sharp Buck and his charming cousin stepped on deck. A few minutes later we were bolling along towards the open sea Bound for the beautiful Chesterfields.

Conversation

'It's easier going now, Ma'am. Nothing like sea travel for comfort, in writing or in reality. The old Fist and Spear've always found it so. Education's never drawn 'em like the tides of the world. You can't get the boats out of your blood when your forbears fought with the sea for a living.

'Oh, aye . . . I've travelled from end to end of the States in a state of invisible discomfort at sixty miles an hour and you waiting for her to slow down before you can jump . . . But there's nothing like the comfort of a ship. I've studied metallurgy and a little botany for the needs of me living but a knowledge of ships'll take you further than botany or other education.

'Aye . . .

'What with having it on me mind and one thing and another I dreamt I saw Buck Johnson on a fine schooner full o' silver. Mexican *pesos* . . . That was a fine stronghold he had in the Chesterfield Islands . . .

'Very dangerous to mariners, but Nature's own hiding place for wreckers and so on, if any. Ships were apt to get into a maelstrom between the islands if they were strangers. An asset to fellers making a living from the flotsam and jetsom of life. Aye, when you hang for a living on the acts of God – so-called by lawyers – all well and good. But you shouldn't jog His hand in the matter.

'The feller that makes a living from providential accidents at sea is in a favourable position, as is well known in Liverpool. But let him put out a finger to assist the plans of Providence and the man becomes a murderer.

'But the Chesterfields were never used by wreckers on a large scale, same as Guardafui . . .

'Guardafui – "Look out for the light" . . .

'That'll show you the meaning of the word . . .

'Aye, I could weave you a good piece out of Guardafui. Fiction with a ballast o' truth . . .

'Strangers think it means the lighthouse – but there's some Liverpool salvage men know better. Plus a good few Arabs . . .

'All the boats coming along from the Persian Gulf . . . India . . . All the traffic up the East Coast . . . Zanzibar and Arabia . . . A lot o' harem traffic, whether slaves or women, passes that corner. A regular meeting spot, resembling Bloody Lane Ends, on the highways of the sea. Pearls and princesses . . .

'Aye. And plus that the boats carrying the levies of the Mahomedan Church. Church dues and taxes that are collected on the East Coast . . . A grand spot for observing the maritime commerce of the Eastern World. Guardafui . . .

'I might push in Peg Hooper, too. A one-legged feller from Liverpool that knew the Persian Gulf as well as he knew his mother's hearthrug in winter. He and Buck Johnson had a little to-do about getting some pearls over to the Shah's agent . . .

'They think the world of good pearls in Persia. Very choicey to secure the best of the market.

'They'd been lifted from somewhere in India in transit from somewhere up north. Property of an Indian Begum . . .

'Well, Ma'am, you'll see I've had no opportunity in

this chapter to work in any nature. I've had to be fully occupied with me characters. But perhaps you could insert the necessary for me. Mention the sponges, for a change – and you can't overdo the blue water. Azure's a good word. Sapphire's commoner, plus incorrect for sea water. You can jot down limpid, too, while I think of it, although it'll never overtake the simple word clear for effect plus the truth.

'I ought to be thinking of me fauna too. I'm introducing the lemur, so-called the Madagascar cat. And there's those spotted seals on the south island. A pelt like a leopard and so-called the leopard seal. Worth fifty pounds apiece. I used to dispose of a few to the Hudson Bay Fur Company, Oxford Street. Aye, for the decking of some proud beauty in Piccadilly men've got to ransack an obscure group of islands in the Indian Ocean. Clog and Shawl's done less harm to the animal world than the *haut ton* of London. There's less brutality under homespun, come to facts. Vanity's the cruellest instinct in the world. When a woman loses her pity and incites men to cruel slaughter of an innocent animal she'll lose her morals next.

'I never did much with furs. Museums are different, and so are zoos. There's some learned intelligence in supplying museums with a few choice specimens. But when once you start with furs for bedizening women it means wiping out a species unless you're going to breed 'em.

'Aye, Hudson Bay Fur Company, Oxford Street . . . And Gerrard, Dulwich, would know me. All African fellers there. A veritable poet's corner for renegades of all kinds. Get your cheque plus some hearty entertainment, and off you go again to the ends of the earth for a few novelties. Everything gigantic was an attraction there. They liked breaking records, whether in the size of a sea-lion or a prehistorical egg or the colour of a precious stone. The jewels I've seen there'd beat the world for oddity. Emeralds that weren't green and rubies that'd never been red. They'd encourage you to bring flotsam from old wrecks. Treasure trove never declared to any governments . . . Daggers and coins and poisoned phials . . . All complete with the history of everything they bought from you.

'If a lady wanted to wear something unusual she'd go to Dulwich for it. She'd not be content with a seal or a sable for her tippet. She'd be sure to find something bizarre enough for Queen Cleopatra or others of the demi-monde.

'Talking of the underworld, I shouldn't like it to be said that I've sullied my book with characters of that kind. It takes a Shakespearean pen to make such women presentable to the world of literature. And I'm not asking a lady to gloss over the facts for me with literary language.

'That Colonel Aderley – I'm calling him that for suitability's sake . . . Brings a girl all the way from

Indian Territory and sets up a saloon in Majunga. Champion poker player though he was, he was no gentleman where ladies were concerned. I don't know whether we should call her a paramour. Suffice it to say she was fond of him at first, although she'll be obliged to shoot the feller in the ultimate.

'The girl that can spin a wheel at faro and remain good's a marvel. But Belle Seymour's going to be the exception. I'll have no demi-mondes in my book, trailing their scents and laces. If the world can't look to women for an example of purity, the men'll lose heart too. They've always looked to marriage to absolve the past. And if women are going to fail them, heaven has no more resources.

'That's why I'm giving Belle Seymour a turn at the wheel on the old *Omoru*. It'll wipe out the past quicker than most things to steer a fine schooner through blue waters. And if we dress her in simple costumes like a sailor suit or her Indian buckskins, she'll respond with her behaviour and purify the atmosphere for all concerned.

'Aye, in the proximity of a false Mahomedan like Effendi Paka it'll be advisable to bring forward the fine character of the young Indian girl. Harem and everything else he had. All the religious privileges of the fez . . .

'Well, Ma'am, I must leave a little earlier to-day. I promised to meet H – at the lunch hour so that he

could accompany me to some of the offices. Those lift experts are not too friendly when they see you're poor and obliged to sell postcards. They pretend there's no room – leave you standing below. But with H – to do the managing, I can get through better. Always well dressed, even when he's borrowing a sixpence. Always gets a "Sir" from the lift boys.

'Well, Ma'am, here's to . . .

'What's that, Ma'am? Guardafui? . . . Oh aye, we were conversing about it, now I come to recollect . . . "Watch out for the light" it means. I told you that . . .

'Aye, Buck Johnson made a lot out o' salvage, one time and another. 'Twas an easy matter for a pilot to be in touch with the salvage boats . . . And knowing the rocks like the back of his hand . . .

'All those vessels coming from the Persian Gulf . . . India, etcetra. Up the coast from Zanzibar . . .

'Guardafui . . . A picturesque spot, if ever there was one. Emblazon it properly with suitable maritime language and it'll sure make an interesting novelty.

'Aye. Well, Ma'am, I'll leave it to you to put the bloom on. Here's to *au revoir*.'

Chapter V

All our supplies were now neatly stowed away and Jack had soon dressed the *Omouru* with every stick of Canvass that she could carry, determined to give the big cattemerans and Baba Cara's dow a race to the Chesterfields, although by now they were well away, having sailed a few hours before us. We soon passed the lime stone cliffs of Old Majunga but the man from the crows nest reported No Sails in sight. Miss Seymore now appeared dressed in her native Indian buckskins. The material was made from selected young deer skin brayed to such a silky texture that it resembled silk velvet. Indian well fitting britches a Jerkin ornamented with tokens, a pair of beaded mocassins and a wide-brimmed ladies sombrero, with a rattlesnake hat band made up a befitting and quite novel costume. How is this rigout for the sea boys, it fits all right for the prairies. We all declared it to be just the best she could have got for sailoring. Without more adoo she called on the mate to show her the compass point and forth with she took charge of the wheel.

The effect of the advent of this young lady on board put all hands in good humour and even the old *Omoru* seemed to pick up her best speed under her magic

touch. As the schooner was broad abeam forad, built like a seagull, she rose and fell with a long fetch[1] not found in too many sea going craft, she in fact was good for any wheather anywhere. With Stanleys supervission never anything went wrong, he was a true born sailor and diver and from what I could see nothing else. So barring that I offered to relieve him once or twice, I could discover he plainly wished to show me he could run her, and let me be the thinking man of the schooner, especially as we had now on board a second mate in the form of Pretty Cherokie Belle. Buck and I employed our time on board spinning yarns or he would strum a tune on his guitar and we passed our time mostly Dulsie far niente (Italian) doing sweet nothing.

He told me quite a history of his cousins life. She was educated he said by the Padres in the Pueblos, and afterwards developed a strong effection for animals especially horses, could throw a lariette (lasso) as well as any cowpuncher and further more had a knack of taming wild horses known to herself alone. There was in the ranges he said a black horse who bore the character of not only being untamable but would attack a pursuer and had the reputation of killing many men who had undertaken his capture. In the winter time he would draw near the outlying stations to lick rock salt. Belle being raised on the ranches soon understood his time of visiting and as he licked special pieces of rock salt

[1] Plunge?

she would meet him and lay down a few ears of maize, so eventually the horse knew her time of coming and she knew his. This performance went on for quite a long while, but eventually the savage brute succumbed to kindness, so much so that he would allow her to stroke him and showed he was fond of the child by his actions but would turn and bolt at the approach of a stranger, especially a mounted one. Finally he and the girl became fast friends and he allowed her to ride him bare backed till eventually he became quite tame, but would allow no one else to mount him. This story soon travelled through Indian Territory and Cherokee Belles name became famous.

Johnson had just completed his yarn when the Crows Nest cried Ship Ahoy! The glas found the Dow to the South West and Presently the Cattamarans were sighted keeping the same course as we were on. These last looked more like brown birds in the distance skimming the waves. After a short while the Dow having sighted us changed her course and dropped a canoe and we picked up Old Baba Karra without much delay. He was all smiles and one could see plainly the pardon had greatly relieved him. He drank coupiously and talked about nothing but Good Old London and Lambeth walk. We were forced to smile and Miss Seymour knowing the cause of his joyous demeanour sympathised with him. We had several Malay divers on board and these men were all good seamen as they had

been with the schooner for several years, whilst one well built muscular fellow who was a cripple acted as Bowsun. He could speak English well, was always smiling and laughing and had full charge of the crew forrad, and on account of his lameness was called Captain Hobalong. Hobalong was confidential man to the mate and reported the wants of the rest and received a double ration of rum daily. He was a good helmsman and knew how to handle the *Omoru* perfectly. He and I soon became fast friends and he doled out many a grim story of the Persian Gulf, the Malay straits and many other uncanny corners. In fact he had been badly wounded in an encounter with Chinese Pirates which had caused his lameness. Hobalong took the wheel and supper over we had private extempory theatricals on board. Miss Seymore easily scored above all, she had a charming voice and gave us the Bell of Tennesey, and regaled us with sand dances break downs and the Spanish Fandango, to the tune of Johnsons guitar.

We had a bright moon light and continued our Yarn spinning and merrymaking till nearly Midnight when the welcome cry Land Ahoy from aloft caused a lull in our merrymaking. The mate ran up to the nest and reported The Chesterfields. A cheer was raised from the foksul to the stern and Belle becoming excited ran up the ladder after him glasses in hand and Reported two real first water diamonds worth all New York and Tiffanies, Broadway (The world famous good jewelers

of the U S A). I felt a little excited and surely Belle had made no mistake. One of the Islands an octahedron shape showed the best nestled as it was in its ocean setting and proved afterwards to be used at some remote period for the burial place of sea rovers of historical repute. I felt tired and so did Buck so we were determined to sleep it out.

Baba Kara said it would be the safest to enter the secret passage to the Chesterfields at day dawn, as we should have to describe a perfect S curve and although he knew the passage well he would advise us to wait for his Dow and we could follow her in as we were deeper and larger every way. I left them arguing and followed by my friend from Oklahoma turned and slept soundly till aroused by the thundering breakers lashing the sea gurt Islands. We could feel we were taking tremendous leaps and had a grand sight from my state room through the large square ports of two giant sea moss covered cliffs, we went through the cleft of the first island in quick time and landed in a beautiful cave where we dropped anchor in 25 ft of clear water at low tide.

Baba Kara's outfit occupied a cove about 400 yards away. He threw up four cammel hide tents on the shelving beach. Jack Homerod and Belle now called on the Malagash boys to produce the Fadangans (chairs) and mounted to the cave pointed out by Baba Cara being carried by the muscular Malagashe boys, advising myself and Buck to take it easy for a while

whilst the cave was got ready for us. Belle and Jack were now busy arranging one of the most beautiful suits of Apartments built by dame nature it is possible to describe.

Meanwhile buck and I had a good heart talk together he told me of his wanderings since the Affair at Tenneha station, and as he had as he put it made his pile all he wanted was to go home he had been a long time from the old folks. He would risk it he said and devide the pile as he as well as his cousin had enough coming from oil leases if I would go with him as my evidence would clear him. I looked Buck clean in the eyes and made this answer Stay with me till I have salved the *Empress of India* and Buttler I said I am yours even if I dont get a bean. I thought I had read you Cap he said but you never opened up. I replied Buttler is it necessary, And I related to him one or two episodes of my past history. Its all right Cap he answered what you ever did is done, To the devil and the deep sea. But you can take it from me I never pulled a gun on that Sheriff although I had no use for him I held back for the Old Folks sake. Right Buck I answered, we'l stick together anyhow and I am with you after I have had a go at the *Empress of India*. Buck shook on it split a small bottle and we both smiled.

Conversation

'Well, Ma'am, it surely is a soothing operation to

climb up these steps and sit here in the sun. "Them golden stairs" is what I'd be inclined to call 'em if I gave way to poetic license.

'Those villas opposite have a strong resemblance to Madeira. . . .

'Aye, a feller's apt to get a dose of sadness after Sunday in our house. Gets him in the middle here, so-called the seat of the emotions by the ancients.

'Every country has its troubles. I read in the newspaper last night that there are eighty thousand deaths from snake-bite every year in India – or were before they began to meddle with scientific antidotes. And that's *their* trouble, combined with the man-eating tiger – one o' Nature's most ferocious creations consistent with beauty. But snake-bite's a national sore that leaves no hurt. 'Tis like Nature. No more than being drowned in a river – a clean death provided by Nature and no shame to it.

'It's when you see men killing themselves with drink and the demi-monde – offending the virgin Artemis – that you see a sore'll never heal. Selling a bottle to buy a woman, there's three people fatally injured in that process – the native, the white man and the woman. What's snake-bite, what's lightning, but the sharp risks every savage knows? Better to be trampled to death by an elephant than by the human crowd. 'Tis a quicker process and the soul flies clean.

'But the literary habit sure is a consolation to the

spirit. Like a belt round the waist when you've been unable to seize a meal, it keeps body and courage together. Braces are of no effect when you're battling with hunger. Scarcely intimate enough, if you'll excuse the notion.

'Aye, literature's a thorough bodyguard to a man in any position. And when you've been in such situations as I've experienced you've always got something up your sleeve you can pull out and pick from. Suitable language, too, to convey the idea'll flow easy when once you start. If your visions are for example Arabian in nature then your language comes up suitably coloured. I know the Arabs. I know the Portuguese.

'Miserable little fellers. Like the Spaniard, he's only a man when he's excited. After that you could kick him all over the place. Same with the French. It takes a man with northern affections to go on exhibiting prowess when the first furore is over. Nature's provided the Saxons with a calm ferocity'll carry 'em far. Same with the Teuton. But sensible, mind you. Knows when to be submissive. A fearless man's always submissive if you show him he's wrong. 'Tis the other kind that always gets a bluff on you.

'Justice in thought is what the Northern races fancy and it's stronger than the written law . . . 'Twas a reclamation of soul to turn my back on Leopold's border although an outlaw so-called . . . That feller with his epaulettes! . . . Some sort of little officer dressed

up like a fancy doll. Wanted me to walk over to his commandant a hundred and fifty kilometres away. Seeing that he was so far from his base I made bold to kick him. Aye . . . And while I was engaged in self-defence my native boys'd gone into natural formation against his men. Six or eight little soldiers of some kind.

'If justice exists that elephant was mine! Howbeit I wasn't for losing me boys, so I let them put me over the border. He didn't suggest an arrest, being under no misapprehension as to which was morally top dog. I got him fair and square with a kick like that! . . . Feller like that's too small for any man to fight like a gentleman. The Latin races're a demoralising influence on any battlefield.

'Aye, when you see the havoc they've wrought in a little quiet spot like Madagascar! Exiling a handsome woman like the Queen to Algiers to fade away in home-sickness . . . A dignified, gentle woman . . . Why, I've seen her disrobe and bathe amongst the crocodiles. Strip and swim like a web-foot! 'Twas a yearly ceremony to show her royalty to her people. The crocodiles, being sacred creatures, knew better then to touch the Queen of the Malagassies.

'Poor soul . . . I knew the inside of the palace as well as I know this stoep. A grand old place for history. Having been brought up by the Jesuits, the Queen and her sister, the Princess Betselao, felt a natural confidence in me. Aye.

'And look at the flora and fauna of that island! Do the French care a *sou* about the beauties of Nature? Preoccupied as they are with the troubles of the demi-monde, so-called *maîtresses* by the French – oh aye, they'll always wrap the truth up in a pretty word – they've no time to observe Nature. Tied to a woman's apron-strings and her hatboxes, there's no natural development of the country anywhere. You need to travel light and that's what they never can do under the circumstances.

'I could tell you – make a strict note of this, it'll interest the world – about those sacred apes of Madagascar. Living in groves and never worried by man. Between Fort Madongey and Ambui-batu-mittrack. (?) "The place where stones are born" that's what it means. That monkey gallops along quickly, six or seven feet at a bound. *Left foot first* – don't forget that. Short arms, and never uses 'em for locomotion. The man monkey, so-called. Half the size of a man, but he has side-burns and a white face to give him reality.

"Oh, aye, if it's *Nature* you're wanting . . . No need to dwell on the French . . . What about that monkey at Btsimsarak? An egg-scooper! Provided by providence with a forefinger twice as long as the other digits. Could scoop an ostrich egg if necessary. No doubt a relic of the old days when the moa, so-called, was part of the scenery. A world-beater for egg measurement, that bird. But no wings. His size being his natural

weapon of defence. Not like that little wagtail . . . Look at his delicate balance, like a boat on the waves . . . And that's *his* armoury. There's about a hundred and twenty varieties of that bird and he's got as much detail in him as in you or me. Workmanship as careful went to the makings of his little organs. But he never gave his Maker a moment's trouble, because he'd never transgressed the laws of Nature. Not like these fellers who sell a bottle for purposes of licence.

'Man's the only animal that's self-destructive. Fouls his den and then lodges a complaint to the Creator *re* discomfort.

'Well, Ma'am, I mustn't detain you unnecessarily. Here's me chapter to date. I'll be quite happy sitting here. Those villas sure have a look of Madeira about them . . .

. . . . . .

'How does it strike you? There's Nature coming in presently, when we get to the grotto and the lemurs. A conglomeration'll suit the Americans. All this pretty nature they've heard of in cinemas, but at the same time a unique narrative.

'Of course I could 'a put the Chesterfields into an essay. But essays don't catch the popular taste. What we used to call *vox populi* is always necessary to success.

'I had a notion last week that it'll be wise to make Aderley's woman the sister of Cherokee Bill. That'll be agreeable to Americans. He was hanged, laffing.

'Not a soul but could help loving a man for such a death scene. "Do you want anything?" they said to him. Governor or chaplain or some such feller that's trained to ask frivolous questions at a solemn moment. Want anything! When there's the whole horizon lying out there unpegged . . . "I do," he says. "Don't cover me eyes" – and looks all round him, bold as an archangel, and smiling at the sky. Poor feller. Brought up as he was, who's to blame him for extravagant notions?

'I've been making an advance picture in me mind whereby Belle Seymour'll be able to bring in her shooting. I think I've explained to you before that Effendi Paka was a thorough-going Mahomedan. Observed all the tenets of the Faith – harem and so on. Thoroughly orthodox. At one time when he was holding his own on the high seas [1] he kept one o' these gazelle-eyed Georgians on the Chesterfields. Soft, pretty women they are. Never answer a man back or offer an unwanted remark.

'My notion *re* plot was that Aderley should catch Parker's Georgian woman one day at Majunga when she was shopping over there. *Her veil slips!* Aye, I'll make her veil slip and he sees beauty exposed to the world before she has time to summon a blush and adjust it again.

'How does that strike you for workable, Ma'am? When you've made a plot, you must get it down or it'll

[1] A Fist-and-Spear euphemism for piracy.

go stale in the mind. Pop it down now and it'll keep fresh as paint.

'Of course Belle Seymour isn't in love with Aderley. But no Indian-bred girl of high spirits'll stand her pride being interfered with. We'll – we'll get 'em all on board by hook or by crook. Sensational events're always improved if there's no likelihood of a getaway. She'll quietly shoot him when a convenient moment offers. They can be observing the sunset from the bows or something else suitable. We don't want anything vulgar, like these cinemas, screams and struggles and so forth. After all, Aderley was a gentleman, although uncertain at poker, and he shall die a gentleman's death by a clean shot from the revolver of a high-spirited Indian girl.

'Naturally she'll retire afterwards to the cabin with dignity. No excuses offered or asked for.

'Aye, I saw her in there musing to herself . . .

'Well, Ma'am, how does the *Omoru* strike you? A wave-dancer, if ever there was one. And the Chesterfields'll be a world-beater for background. Boats dancing against a picturesque scene of natural beauty and not even an old Admiralty chart to make you remember there's an over-civilized world not far away. One o' the happiest spots on earth.

'You shall describe the birds and I'll do the needful by the ship. Ships need a man to grapple with 'em, if you'll excuse the remark, whether in the literary world

or in reality. You can paint the birds from the notes I'll give you. I'm old, and you can see the colours better on the pen.

'Aye, at my age a man can see the pretty sights of the past gay as ever. But when it comes to writing, the furore dies away somewhat. You doubt you'll live to see it, and then the bite drops out o' your pen.

'Aye . . .'

Chapter VI

It was quite a long time before the mate came to our relief. We mounted the Fellanzans or chairs and were soon carried up to the terrace not far from the summet of the crest. That we both had an agreeable surprise is not saying sufficient. The floor of the cave, a spacious Hall with a beautiful rock dome had been daintily furnished. Cammel hair rugs given by Baba Kara made the softest of carpets whilst the two natural settees one on each side, carved from the solid rock were to be sleeping quarters for buck and I These had been made into two beautiful beds by upholstered work from the mates cabin. There were also several nitches and reclining chairs likewise hewed from the rock, and polished whilst around the walls were handy nitches let in the rock. Who carved out the nitches we shall probably never know.

Whilst Buck and I were admiring things in came his Cousin, telling us of wonders she had discovered. We followed the excited girl. What do you think of this? she said directing us to a hole in the mountain. A beautiful stream of light shot down the shaft throwing the surroundings up as clear as daylight, whilst ivylike creepers covered the walls except on one side. On the

other a stream of the coolest of water fell sheer to a hundred feet below and from the bottom of the falls came the sweet music of babeling water, varying in tune as the current of cool air always present wafted it to the listners reminding one of the sweet sound of the Aelian Harp (Harp of the Winds). Whilst we viewed the scene and listned to the music two lemurs or golden ringtailed Madagascar cats raced up the walls and resting on a ledge below the opening looked back at us intruders with large appealing eyes and seemed to be thoroughly satisfied with us newcomers. We smiled at the beautiful vision and followed Belle. The next sight we had was a row of stork like sea birds sitting side by side on a long ledge just below the roof of the natural gallery. They made no move or showed the slightest fright. They were slate coloured, with crimson chests and had large stork like red beaks and were evidently hatching. Belle retired daintily making no sound with her small moccasined feet. As we walked away Buck and her cousin held a conversation in Indian and I heard distinctly what they said. Was all this grotto made by man or wasnt it perhaps Manitou (Almighty God of the Indians.) Buck smiled and we retired.

The twenty cases of silver had been brought up and like wise a good supper. After which Johnson and I sampled the carved out lounges and declared the place not only cooler than the cabins of the *Omoru* but better than any hotel we could have had anywhere, with

music always pleasing to the ear supplied free. As shades of evening were drawing nigh Belle assayed a call for Jack but was answered by a double echo. I laughed and tumbling out of my settee I looked on the *Omoru* with my powerful glasses. I could see the diving gear spread over the yards and the two long Tom swivel guns were being mounted on the Schooner which looked a perfect picture in the rays of the setting sun, in fact all our surroundings were heavenly.

The Cave was now lit up by our ships lamps and the surroundings and shades all one could wish for. Even Belle declared it a Paradise, and busied herself arranging Jacks Cave Opposite to her own. At last Jack arrived in his falangin or chair and the armed watch having been all arranged and Posted Belle introduced Jack to his diggings and he liked them immensely, in fact we all fell in love with the place and with its double echo and the sweet music from the water shoot and Belle had soon tamed the birds which were not at all shy and got so tame they would invade our sanctorum to the great amusement of Capt Hobalong who was always in demand by Miss Seymour as she was always buisy. Even the two gold coloured black ringtailed Madagascar cats now made themselves quite at home.

We now had our leasure to discuss events. Especially as Baba Kara would show us all the best shell banks [1] old wrecks etc. The old man even loaned us

[1] Mother-of-pearl shells.

all his best sponge divers, so that we would soon be ready to return to Majunga. Belle insisted on being taught the diving business and insisted on accompanying the *Omoru* whilst myself and Buck would range round the Islands accompanied by a couple of divers and find out any new Pearling beds or wrecks worth working. This being settled the Schooner would sail early in the morning and return every evening as it was necessary to lay the mother of pearl shells on the sand beach close by till they opened up ready for cleaning. And this plan was followed.

Baba Caras two Indian money changers now paid us a visit, and having handed over several bottles of gold as security received their silver in exchange. All pressious metals were bartered and exchanged by weight. These silver and gold dealers all carried scales. And the indians who mostly came from Bombay visited all the big Malagashe towns along the coast carrying all kinds of cloth prints silks and in fact all you could expect to find in a general dealers store. Each market was well attended by the natives, And the merchandise was carried from town to town along the coast by Arab Dows and Katamerans. These markets were an amusing sight. Cattle traders, gold washers, amber hunters native goldsmiths and a host of others and troupes of native dancers and wandering comedians and poets doctors dressed in every shade and colour formed one of the most pleasing sights it is possible to imagine.

The Gold trade of course was paramount as Madagascar from East to West had numerous alluvial fields and under the Queens rule before French occupation twice the quantity of gold reached the coast. In fact the worst calamaty that can befall any country is French Occupation. In one word centuries have proved they cannot colonise. They have the knack of bringing nothing into a new collony and take all out but put nothing in.

The Dow would sail for the coast and return every few days. Carrol left the business to the Indians, and as this was his last trip he would do all he could to help us out. We all slept soundly in our quarters, being wakened before sunrise by the large birds, as they passed to and fro with food for their little ones. Belle was charmed at this whilst the Ring tailed cats came quite near for food which Miss Seymour had placed on a rock ledge for them, and she delighted to watch their capers and antics, but although she tried hard she could not get them to allow her to touch them. After breakfast the mate announced he was ready to sail by the toling of the ships bell. And leaving an armed guard at the cave we all descended to the *Omoru*.

The dow sailed first and we were soon clear of the islands and dropped anchor at a place chosen by Baba Cara which he declared had never been worked for years. The divers baskets were lowered first then

holding another weight they descended and in the space of a minuet came up and took a rest. This performance they repeated till the subiques or baskets were full and to me new at the game it really seemed wonderful. The mate turned a subique upside down and picking up an oyster over a foot long he opened it with his sharp knife with a stab and a circular cut made from the point of the flat blade. The Oyster, which he said was not edible, he threw away. The shell inside was long and flat and had a beautiful pearly luster of all shades. He declared them to be far superior to anything he had seen before in the line of Mother of pearl. Belle claimed this first one. Diving now took place on both sides of the schooner. As fast as the subiques came on board they were transferred to the large tanks. They are taken to the sand beach and in a day or two having opened up are well washed and are stacked up ready for shipping. Consequently there was plenty of hard work attached to the diving business, but as it was a money making game, providing one could pick out good banks, especially like the one we were on, it was quite worth while. The water was beautifully clear so much so that you could see the shadows of the divers as they worked. The diving suits were all put to use, and buck and I lounged contently under the awning listening to the Yarns of Old Baba. Leaving all other business to Jack and Capt Obalong and Capt Seymore as Belle was now dubbed.

Conversation

'Ma'am? I'm well away now! Easy as going on a voyage on a penny steamer. It's just these first chapters make you tremble somewhat. Stepping about like a cat on hot bricks to find safe footing. Take it in, now, and don't hurry yourself. No need for haste . . .

'I've lost me pipe again . . .

'No, certainly not. I'd be ashamed to take another of the doctor's. Howbeit – if he *has* an old one lying about . . . I'm not asking for his Sunday meerschaum.

'Aye, that'll be most acceptable, although not the shape I generally choose. Now, Ma'am, I'll excuse you at once. Just leave me to me thoughts.

'Excuse me calling you back, I'd appreciate a little tobacco, if you can find some in that jar . . .

. . . . . .

'How does it strike you for a fresh picture on the world's canvas? Those lemurs're the daintiest little animals extant. Neither cat nor monkey, they've been dowered by Nature with the privileges o' both. Beauty with agility's always a world-beater.

'Aye, when I see 'em exhibited at a zoo, the imagination travels back to that cave o' mine where freedom lent 'em beauty. You'll have to strike in a colour note there for me. Get in the little cascade, leaping a hundred feet down to the sea level as if it was jumping to the bottom of a well. Didn't escape to the open till far

down near the beach. A spear of sunshine fell down on it part of the day. There was a rift in the rock to admit these violet rays. Violet! 'Twas the whole rainbow old Sol used to work up out o' that one bonny little waterfall.

'That'll be something for you to work on. I'm too old to undertake descriptive writing myself. Don't forget the cool smell o' the ferns and creepers that came hanging down the sides while the sun could reach 'em a bit. A touch o' green's restful in any picture, however beautiful.

'Those Chesterfields . . . More wrecks laid low and more rascals made a living there than tongue will ever tell.

'Those old caves – who's been there in historical days? That East Coast . . . That's where history's been made in the Eastern hemisphere. Same as it was made on the Lancashire side of England. Fellers and ships from the dawn of time finding out the treasures of the world. And then we let the French sit in Madagascar same as a hen on China eggs. All that fuss and nothing happening – neither in the nursery or in the natural development o' trade and commerce.

'Of course if I'd had some accomplishment like Sanscrit, I could 'a put a bit o' writing on the walls of that cave to improve the picture. But those carved out seats're the real thing. Metamorphic sandstone.

'Aye, cross the island anywhere, you simply sail the surf and away – once you know the currents. Getaways of every description for immediate necessities.

'The East Coast has ample resources . . .

'What's that, Ma'am?

'Oh, aye, a map . . . Certainly we'll have to have a map . . . But no need to follow the details of all the ocean currents off the Chesterfields. Not necessary to help the Admiralty to information belongs by right of use to fellers needing privacy . . .

'A good, showy map of the East Coast'll suffice to give the book a learned air. From the Chesterfields right round to the Persian Gulf. Better embrace Aden too. I'm well acquainted with the Red Sea . . .

'We'll have to get your little daughter to do it. Ma'am, that girl's a navigator! The rarest map of modern times, that old Ivory she did for me.[1] Her name'll be blazoned on the path of history. A genius at this so-called cartography, meaning, in plain Anglo-Saxon, map making. Logarithms and calculations like any old skipper.

'Oh, aye. And I thought she was shy. But she's not coy, either – gifted with too much sensibility for that. 'Tis a barmaid's duty to be coy. No gentlewoman has the knack.

'Don't you remember the coy-maids of old? A regular profession for women not too advanced in virtue.

"And the coy maid, half willing to be prest,
Would kiss the cup and pass it to the rest."

[1] The map of the West Coast in Volume I.

'Ma'am? Well, of course, what should it mean but decoy? The decoy was a notable female figure in historical times in England. It meant getting fellers in to drink ale when they'd meant to walk past the sign. You stood in the door in your fancy ribbons and laces . . .

"*And the coy maid, half willing to be prest,*" . . .

'Goldsmith, poor feller. A pen like a paintbox and all he could do was to eke it out with the penny whistle, plus some I. O. U.'s to his friends.

'Johnson was good to that lad. So-called the Great Lexicographer, all he had from Nature was a furore for words. And all he could do with 'em was to put 'em in rows. Howbeit he was able to lend ten pounds to poor Noll – a poet'd weave words into sounds of heavenly beauty. Plus sensibility. In the ultimate a poet'll beat all the word-mongers for sense, in spite of the pretty sound of it which is apt to deceive the common.

'Well, Ma'am, we're full steam ahead now. But in the furore of sailing me ship I mustn't forget that love creeps in where angels fear to tread, as the old adage says.

'M'am? Well, no, to tell you the truth I'm in somewhat of a quandary *re* the love interest. Aderley's got to go, that's certain, if once I can manœuvre him on board. That'll leave Belle Seymour any amount of opportunity for attracting Stanley.

'I'd fall in love with her myself if I wasn't somewhat out of practice in writing the appropriate form of words. Suffice it to say it's still in the hands of Fate, or as the Greeks'd say, on the knees of the gods. Whichever way comes most convenient, what I *have* got is a clear vision of the marriage. She'll be in a glistening sou'wester, and her hand on the wheel. All smiles and blowing hair, being somewhat rough weather. The captain'll marry them . . . but to tell you the truth that's me worst difficulty. I'd like the girl to marry the ship's owner naturally. The best's not too good for her breed. And that'd be meself. But then steps in the drawback – who's to perform the ceremony? I'll have no loose knots on my ship. It's got to be matrimony or nothing with a high-bred Indian girl like that. Chaste as coster girls they are.

'Well, just think it out, and meanwhile I'll be getting ahead. Crowding on all sail now. So I'll make it au revoir . . .

'Excuse me returning for a moment, but how did the picture of the cave strike you? When that's decorated up with a shaft of light darting from the top . . . And the seabirds and the heavenly prismatic hues of the spray that'll beat any jeweler in the world – aye, and still beaming out beauty to the solitude while I sit here imbibing philanthropy for a living . . .

'And for a touch of the supernatural the strange echoes. Ma'am, those echoes were not too reassuring

at sundown. A place where man has been secretly occupied for some centuries'll have a natural lonesomeness at night. And the water confusing all the sounds somewhat . . .

'That's why I had to do some balancing tricks with a picturesque scene of gaiety like the Malagassy market.

'Those Indian traders . . . Always carried scales. Mexican dollars for fifty cents are quite as heavy as the American dollar and the silver's a little bit better for that matter . . .

'I'll say good-day now, Ma'am. Mustn't keep you any longer from your household duties.'

Chapter VII

The diving apparatus was now buisy and Belle watched each one intently as they came up for a spell a smoke and a tott. She then disappeared, but soon appeared on deck dressed in one of the daintiest of bathing suits, and calling Jack she declared herself ready for diving if he would rig her out. Jack smiled and her cousin now spoke to her in Pawnee I could make out most of it. He told her not to be foolish, remember, he said, you are a woman and that was a mans Job. She answered him sharply saying mans job indeed and dont you think a woman as good as a man, eh cousin? Buck never replied. Well, she continued, I am going to prove it, I am going to see what is at the bottom of the sea as well as other folks so there. Come on Jack I am sure I know all about the game, I have been watching.

Buck walked back to the deck chair lit a cigar and smiled. There was no way out of it so with a little instructions Obolong was in charge of the air pumping gear. She rigged herself out and wonderful to relate she made her first dive without a hitch. Wonderful lass this I said to myself. As she sat having a blow a Daughter of Neptune sure enough. Ready in a short while she made the next dive alone, although Jack

watched intently. The air bubbles came to the surface regularly after a time up she came inflated bringing with her a large piece of beautiful red coral. Divested of the diving suit she waved that corral at her cousin. And smiled. She had won. Buck smiled also and sighed and said wonderful woman. I'm proud of her She now appeared in her buckskins smiling radiantly drew a chair opposite us and began to tell all she had seen. The corral was all colours some in bunches whilst some clung to the rocks showing a delicate fern like shape and a few coloured sponges also clung to the rock whilst she had kept quite still and watched a shoal of gleaming fish go by. The only thing that looked dangerous was a large crab or spider with long protruding feelers she had touched one of these feelers when the thing which had a tail like a lobsters turned as quick as lightning and ran off, they were as big as a small boy and were purple blue there were lots of other pretty shells sticking to the rocks besides the oysters but she had expected to see small trees. But the bottom besides being beautiful, as you could see it quite plainly was all right to walk over but the shoes were a little heavy as she was not used to them. She was satisfied she would soon be able to dive as well as anyone else in fact it was all beautiful to her, whilst the water was so transparent she could see the divers working quite plainly.

It was great fun and she persuaded Buck to try it,

as he would see things just as she had. It was like a dream and you would have more divers at the seaside if they only knew what a pleasure it was. Buck said he was pleased she had enjoyed it and felt half persuaded himself to try it. We all agreed to this, and as there were quite a number of Old recks around the Islands we might pick up something worth while anyway it would be a good pass time and might pay well, as there was no telling about some of these sunken hulks.

Buck agreed to this and we made up our minds to visit the sunken hull of an old bark which had only recently gone down as Old Carrol had told us of it. Baba promised to accompany us and show us not only the bark but several others he knew of, besides that there was a small island which rose from the water like a pyramid which the Malagashes and Arabs said contained hidden treasure. He had been in it and knew the entrance but the natives were so afraid of Vizamba or gohsts who were said to inhabit it and could be so plainly heard once in a while that they would not venture into the heart of the mountain He had found some pretty handled swords and one old flint-locker gun the time he went in, but the Arabs said the Portuguese buried these. And some even called it Shebas grave.

Here Belle broke the old mans conversation by saying, Baba the old flint stock sounds to me more like Rip Van Winkel, and the noises may be all the spirits of Hudsons men turning out at their old game of nine

pins, nobody that I ever saw can play nine pins without shouting especially gohsts of hearty sailors like Hudsons lot. We more than smiled we laughed heartily. Belle was quite right. But Old Baba still hung on to his yarn telling us that all the Arabs could tell of their people for generations, but the Abasynians were the best by far at that kind of game. They could tell the history of the Jews better than the Jews themselves, and it was even a well known fact the Abasynians were the children of Israel as they had the Ark of the covenant at A – in a cave and this was brought out every year and the old wrightings were explained to the people by King Menelick but no one but the Abasynians were allowed to enter the city on that day and this he could prove by the Abasynian cook now on board.

Here Belle again split the yarn by declaring that if Baba had said Knoas Ark she would have believed him. This of course produced another laugh and Carrol joined in this time. Belle was whitty, he said. We all decided to call the cook and hear what he had to say about it . . . The tall Abasynian declared it all to be true as he was born at Adis Abeba he had been to A – every year when with his parents and had seen it. But the Jews? said Miss Seymore. Oh the Jew the Jew was big cattle thief Come from Arabia, and we chased him back. But the Jews crossed the Red Sea said Belle. Oh please me dont know about that Ark belongs to

Menelick, Jews got nothing, bad people got no country. We had another good laugh.

Buck handed the boy a peso and told him he believed he was quite right the lad then left for the galley, having announced that dinner was ready. After which we made our plans for the next day. Baba Kara informed Belle that if she wished to see some beautiful sights she should visit the Sponge beds as he had heard folks say the sea bottom there was surely a grand sight. This she declared she would do as soon as she had practised diving sufficiently well as she had often longed to see what was at the bottom of the sea.

Buck now brought up his guitar and delighted us with beautiful music which sounded lovely. The Sea birds allured by the smell of the Oysters hovered around and as there was quite a variety made a pleasing sight, and relieved the monotony of the endless diving. About three pm Katamerans came in with their find and the shells were measured basket by basket and put in the tanks and booked to their credit. As the shells were to be put on the sand before our return we weighed anchor at 3.30 and sailed close to the shelving shore and as all hands worked with a will we had finished the days work long before sundown. Time enough to try the long tom swivel guns on a small troup of bottle nosed whales a small variety. This was exciting. The first shot the mate potted one at about a mile whilst the second shot came so near another one we

thought it was a hit but the mate declared it a close shave. The guns we all saw were worth carrying and would make it interesting and decidedly dangerous for any wooden vessel. But Stanley was afraid the whales if dead might be washed ashore and become a nuisance to our nasal organs. He however assured us the days diving had given us good results especially as most of the shells would grade on the right side in fact were the best he had ever seen and this news was highly pleasing to Old Baba. The tanks were cleaned and made ship shape long before we dropped anchor in the little cove, and we reached the cave having put in a days pleasure which would always be a bright spot in our memory to refer to in the future.

Buck and I turned in early leaving the young folks and Old Baba still yarning, in fact Baba was good company. His voyages over the desert with slaves and his frequent visits to the home of Paka Pasha were most interesting. His affection to his wife and children was always the pleasing keynote of his wild nature. In fact in spite of what he had done in his wild youth it was more than paid for by his forced absence from home sweet home, so that we all had a kindly feeling for the Old man, and we all hoped that the time was not far distant when he would once more be spending happy moments safe once more surrounded by his family and kinsfolk in the little curiosity shop in Lambeth.

Johnson and I slept soundly till morning the deli-

cious air of the cave was really refreshing and we were awakened by the Cook for Coffee as the ships bell sounded all ready for sailing. The sailors and divers were ready as they were accustomed to working early and finishing as early as they could. Belle was all smiles and had already had breakfast. They wished us good luck. We had three diving suits and everything was ready for us on board our largest Kattermaran which was just the thing we needed for diving. After a good meal and a few drinks we boarded the native boat accompanied by Baba and Capt Hobalong who was in charge he was a splendid diver. We found the first wreck which Capt Hobalong declared was covered by deep sea moss. This floating moss is like long Bermuda grass and is greatly dreaded by divers so we all agreed to run no risks as Buck put it without a Jacpot in sight. We went to another portion of the island where there was a nice shelving sand beach where we were fitted up for diving. I paid strict attention and as Hobalong went down at the same time I made out OK. The water was about 15 feet deep but although the water was quite clear I could see nothing more than the clean sand bottom with a few fish large and small passing us but keeping away from the bubbles. I could see Capt Hobalong who was standing by I motioned upwards shut off the air escape inflated and came up beautifully.

This quite tickled Johnson, who said if that is honestly your first I congratulate you. I assured him it was

I knew nothing about any portion of the game although I had often watched them. How does the rigout feel like down below. That is just it a little weighty head and feet but as I did not move much I enjoyed it and had only seen a few fish passing but they kept away a fair distance. I could see them plainly as the water was quite clear. This was assuring and he ordered Hobalong to rig him out. This was soon done and after a short stay he inflated and came up and was fully satisfied he would soon be able to dive especially if he could see anything worth diving for. Of course he did not like to stay any longer than he did as he was afraid he might forget the instructions. He reconed we would both do better next time. So we concluded to leave the diving alone till we found another old wreck or something interesting. Baba who had been watching the boys on the air pumps thought we had both done splendidly and we all drank to the luck giving the boys an extra tot or two in honour of the great occasion. This portion of the islands was one of the worlds dangerous Spots on account of the varying currents and was exposed to storms in all directions whilst there was no firm anchorage.

We were not long before we came on another wreck of an old sailor of some kind, and it turned out to be just what we were looking for an ancient wreck. There was little or no moss hanging to it and as it was only 25 feet deep was just the thing for novices to practise

on. Hobalong had reported it to be a very old ship laying nearly flat on its side and had pryed off a bit of the wreck. The wood was worm eaten and was oak well seasoned if it had not been honeycombed by worms or insects. Buck was got into harniss and went down with Obelong. I waited patiently and after rather a long stay he came up and after being relieved of his helmet and suit, scratched his head and smiled and then laughed but did not speak. I wondered what he had up his sleeve. I donned the suit and soon found out the reason of his reticence. I tried to stand on the side of the wreck but found no footing as the side of the hull was at an angle of 45 and was like the cone of a roof. So I sat down on the cone and took things as easy as I could keeping a good look out for any unusual sights. A long dark shadow now flashed by followed by one shorter shadow. The short shadow turned and came near enough for me to get a grand sight of his protruding eyes and mossel [muzzle?] shaped snout, sure enough it was a hammer headed shark, he curvetted around flashed past once or twice but kept his distance away, presently the big 15 footer of the same speaces paid me a visit turned head on towards me he was exactly like his mate only twice as long he made several curves and vanished frictened by the air bubbles from Obalong who was standing on the sea bottom cutting a hole in the hull with a sharp bar. I inflated and felt quite a relief on being pulled on board. Well Capt

how did it go, queried Johnson, I related my experience exactly as I saw things. And he said well that is just what happened to me only when the big shadow turned and I saw him I thought that an hostile act and tried to wave him back with my hand and lost my ballance and found myself turned about straddle on the roof, but I think that scared him I did not see him any more or his mate either which was a relief. A Shark with good sence I dont think is dangerous but suppose you got one balmy on the Crumpit like you do in cattle and men. I had not thought of that I answered still there might be something in it, Lets quit this nonsence for a while and give these boys and old Baba a chance. They will soon be able to tell us what there is inside the Old Ship and we can practice up any time, but I must say I have enjoyed the fun so far and we can get to the boys to land us on that sand beach, as we can take a cooler under the cliffs and amuse ourselves shooting at the crabs that scuttle from the water and back, it will pass the time. I thought this a good idea and we were soon landed on the shelving beach with a basket of refreshments and our guns. We found lots of cool shady nooks and caves and these were quite a change from the hot downward rays of the sun.

We had not forgotten our rugs and after a lunch and a reviver Buck opened up with a description of the Arabs and Indians, he had made his pile and was ready for home sweet home any time but was waiting for an

answer to a letter and if the reply was what he expected he would not loiter only he wanted to see Belle and Aderley married as Aderley knew her in the States, had coxed her over, on that bait, Marriage. But some how he had hung fire always declaring he would sell out lock stock and Barrel and take her home and have the marriage there. Belle of course could only agree to this in fact as she put it, it looked sensible, as she had declared that after the marriage she would never enter another gambling hall. I of course agreed with him as we smoked and cooled off and yarned, we noticed the crabs had commenced to run. They circled up to the flotsam and picked up any thing edible left by the receeding tide. We used small sporting winchesters and found it a rather difficult job to catch them, it was fair sport, as they ran as quick as spiders and one could only get them on the turn. We shot quite a number however and then tried our hand on yellow legged Snype. And had enough birds for meat before the Kattameran turned up for us, and got back to the cove just as the *Omoru* anchored.

Conversation

'Aye, I'm tired to-day. That's why I'm late.

'Thank you, Ma'am, a glass of wine'll sure chase the taste of Sunday night from the palate.

'These Russian demagogues, so-called Bolshevists, making night hideous with their penny-dreadful poli-

tics . . . Every street corner contaminated. Can't come out of a bar without treading on the fellers.

'Sunday's not what it used to be. Wherever they can catch the eye of a staring native lad they'll stand there and begin the black-brother palaver. Makes me sick. Mostly Jews that've failed with eggs and ostrich feathers. More talk than muscle.

'Oh aye, the Dutch are not the only nation that make a living out o' politics. From time immemorial man's been cut in three patterns, namely, the fighter, the talker, and the feller with the spade. Naturally, the talker, having more leisure to increase and multiply, the world's getting overrun with the breed. 'Twas always so. But at due intervals the Great Onlooker plans out a massacre of the talking fellers. Gives the soldier his instructions and employs the spade feller to bury 'em, and there's peace on earth for a time.

'Sunday night's a terrible time for preaching, whether church or state. I've never seen anything so dreadful in the world as Sunday night in the Golden City. All these native lads being ruined by civilization faster than you can wink at a gipsy. Nice lads like my Renchoro losing their innocence listening to fellers like that.

'Live on an island or see what you come to! These continentals – what a sample! Their feet awry and straddling behind a counter to annihilate their neighbour's fortune. And if they're not gifted with com-

mercial dishonesty they'll enter the political arena and make a living committing mischief between the tribes of Europe plus the two hemispheres. Aye . . .

. . . . . .

'There you are, Ma'am. Old Sol was almost inviting me to sweet repose. I'm tired this morning, but it was all vivacity when I wrote me chapter.

'Interesting? Naturally it's interesting when it's based on truth. Look at that great crab she saw – big as a lad and looks at you with his eyes crossed like the sticks in fencing. Does it in the hopes of frightening the enemy before he attacks. A proper sea-spider, hairy legs and all. He's a real bad'un. More dangerous to the diver than the octopus.

'Ma'am? No, I've never rightly seen an octopus in the act of discharging his ink. Come to that I could easily have written that I had, if it'd make any difference to the value of what I'm writing for you. Some would – but I'm in for facts. Truth is always more impressive even if you have to leave out sensation to preserve it.

'All round the Seychelles and the coast of Mocha I've seen those sea-spiders. Divers had to look out for sharks, too, but they're not so dangerous as the crab. You can always frighten a shark by letting a bubble escape up the water. All fishes are cowards. But so are men when it's something unknown. Unless congenital idiots. Nature provides us with nerves for our pre-

servation same as with eyelids to protect the eyes. Not as some folks think, and that's only as the insignia of cowardice. A brave man'll not speak of cowardice with disrespect.

'But the greatest danger to divers was the floating moss. Terrible to see it on the move in great fields of thick vegetation. Like a thunder cloud overhead, and you trying to get up before it catches you.

'I saw a good few startling sights off Guardafui . . .

'I've been somewhat tied up in knots *re* that girl at Doulton's I told you about. Stanley's intended and made her living painting flowers on Doulton china. Better keep her in the background for reference – it'll never do to get any nearer than a passing remark. Nice girl, but quiet. Of course Stanley'll have to go home and consummate the marriage if I dont give him the chance of marrying Belle Seymour.

'I've always had an interest in painting. Carried me paints all over the western States. Either copies or a bit of sign-painting. A sign should always have a bit of originality in it, else what price advertisement?

'I'd like to get in a little more about painting on pottery. It'd provide a natural finish to a wildish tale.

'Feller that's lived in all sorts of ways in the Persian Gulf and off Guardafui – intercepting slaves and harem beauties and dodging for wrecks – he'd feel a natural pleasure at hearing from the old folks at home. London

and so on . . . Aye, he'll think he can smell the streets in a letter written from an old curiosity shop . . .

'I lived at one time over that old curiosity shop at the corner. 'Twas when I first joined Scotland Yard soon after I was married. A feller tries his best to settle down then, if ever. We were happy then . . . wheeling the baby on Sunday to Kennington Oval . . . Oh, aye.

'That Abyssinian boy I've culled from his native soil and pushed on to the *Omoru* as cook. Truth to tell he was my boy when I was prospecting in Abyssinia.

'Ma'am? Oh well, when I left Zanzibar I went up there for a wholesome change. In other words it was expedient to get rid of the high seas for a time . . .

'Beautiful quietude in Abyssinia. I was looking for gold to pass the time but as I'd no permit from Menelik I wasn't going in for any display. One boy, a mule, and a white man is about as much as it is safe to flaunt. Any retinue more showy'd be in danger of being blotted out in those days.

'The finest race in Africa, the Abyssinians. If Shakespeare 'd known it, he'd 'a taken his Moor from there. Fine, romantic men that can teach a horse all but speech. A panorama of galloping horses, clanking spurs and shining teeth of the riders. Why, even the mules there are humanised to understand the nature of man. Pretty, glossy creatures they are, that'll turn to speak to a master same as horses in Lancashire do.

'I've seen 'em caparisoned like the finest Arab. Very

loving, so to speak . . . They respond, too, to love. Human as a horse they are.

'That's all in the nature of a country where man and his mount are alone with Nature. The mountains and the bright sun on the sands . . . Life, that's what it is there, as God ordained for it to be – before we thought we knew better and made cities for the maintenance of vice and philanthropy.

'A ferocious people, the Abyssinians. Well drilled in war. They'd lick the Egyptians any day.

'Romantic stories in Abyssinia. Why, that was where Menelik's forefather stole the Ark of the Covenant. From the Egyptians he got it. Being a voodoo he respected, he was glad to secure it for his people. They're Christians, too, many of them. Pray to the Virgin, some of 'em . . . Aye, they're well looked after, what with Her and Jehovah and his Ark.

'They're both Jews and Christians in that country. And being believers in Jesus . . . 'Tis He let everybody in to the human circle! He's not asking too closely what a man's religion is as long as it holds room in it for Christian behaviour. That's what he did for humanity – gave it a solvent that may be called universal . . . Abyssinia or London.

'Oh, aye, I'd hear things as a man alone in Abyssinia that'd never 'a been told to a party, whether explorers or missionaries. There's nothing to fear in a man alone. You hear things from one and another. They've

got the Ark away up in the mountains near X–. Guarded by a ferocious mountain tribe, if the truth were known. Once a year they have it out for procession and you'll see horsemen from all quarters galloping to see it and be blest for the year. Three days journey some of 'em come.

'They say it's got the tables of stone in it with the Commandments. What Moses never expected was that those commandments of his're easier broken than those stone tablets that must've been stolen time and again.

'My boy told me that Ark's got a polished top, with a star on it called the Morning Star. They say the star's put out for the procession once a year and then hid away again in the Ark for fear of mischief happening to Abyssinia.

'Abyssinia's mascot – that old Star of Judah. There's supposed to be the key of heaven kept in the Ark too, but my boy'd never caught a sight of that.

'Once they lose that Ark, they'll go under. But with Menelik claiming to be in the direct line from Solomon, it's all in the nature of things they should cleave to a family heirloom.

'Another holy journey they take once a year is to the rock where Moses struck the stone for a water supply. 'Tis called a miracle, and I'm not blaming any good dowser for putting the credit where 'tis likely to be remembered, and that's on the God of Israel.

'There's a temple at X – and a pyramid of praying stones. Everyone that passes throws up his stone. Stones or rosary beads – 'tis all one to the Great Onlooker.

'There's Mahomedans in Abyssinia, too. My servant had been sent out of the country as a scapegoat and became one of the Faithful. I'd found him in Zanzibar. So he wasn't too averse to giving me private news, as some would 'a been. He had a resentment to satisfy.

'When it comes to the art of life, the Abyssinian is a *homo genus* of his own – a grand picture of the past and the riches man's own feet are trampling down these days, same as a pig'll muddy the cleanest bed before he'll lie down in it. Aye, Menelik's country . . . The richest legends and myths in the known world . . .

'Effendi Parker first went out as a drummer boy there. The country being in a state of war with England. Menelik had said something disrespectful about Victoria, and she was feeling insulted. So she sent an army of revenge, but relented when she heard it was all rocks and hard on the British soldiers.

'She was touchy about insults, which we can't all afford to be. It sure is a prerogative of the great. I often think that all destined to be monarchs should first make a pilgrimage of the Empire in the garb of a pauper. 'Twould surely have a softening influence. Even on the best of 'em . . .

'Virtue's a hard thing, Ma'am. Somewhat like a diamond – beautiful but flinty.

'That Abyssinian campaign would have been a wicked affair if it hadn't been stopped by the Queen. There were songs about it in London: –

> "*Farewell, Mother, you may never*
> *Press me to your heart again,*
> *I'm off now to Abyssinia*
> *Perchance I'll be amongst the slain.*"

'That's how it went – topical.

'A drummer boy . . . Deserted at Kasalla . . .

'Thirty-two miles from Guardafui, Effendi Parker's place . . .

'The Abyssinian native's a fine feller. The further north you go in Africa, as elsewhere in the world, the more sense you'll find. When folks speak of educating the Bantu, they're laying up disappointment. The Congo negro's streets ahead of the Bantu in intelligence. And when, plus that, you get the stimulating friction of American life you'll begin to see why the American negro's far in advance of any Bantu in intelligence. But that's not to say the Bantu must be kept from his place in the sun. There's sunshine enough for everyone and especially for the child race so-called. Where should children be if not in the sun and with full leisure to make 'em happy? A bit of song and dance'll go further than any fancy schemes for soul-saving.

'Come to that, a bit of a tribal fight on a Sunday now and again is an outletting of natural energy that'd save many a crime in the Golden City. No worse than a football match in Lancashire, with the casualties somewhat heavy. This town'd be a deal better and a safer place if the natives could have a Sunday afternoon fight to make 'em forget the fact that they've been carrying parcels all the week. Lingerie and hats and so forth. Emptying slops for the fashionable nabobs of suburbia so-called. That's no work for a fine lad like my Renchoro.

'Aye, poor fellers! They'd go singing to their work on Mondays then. And not always hymn tunes either. 'Thy will be done' and so forth you hear them shouting on their bicycles. A bit o' wild nature let loose in the company of his own sex is man's safety from private wickedness, black or white.

'Well, Ma'am, I'll be getting back earlier to-day. I'm somewhat tired and I've got a few postcards to buy for to-morrow. I'd rather sell me wires. Less effeminate, and you've got something useful to show for your handiwork. But I can't twist 'em tight as I used to, and there's a lot of machine-made stuff to contend with.

'Excuse me calling you back . . . How did you like the picture of leisure I got in at the end? Snipe shooting. And those big crabs on the beach – pretending to charge you but deeply afraid.

'Oh aye, the Chesterfields . . .

'The snipe's the quickest runner there is amongst the birds of the known world. You can add that for effect. Good-bye, Ma'am. I'd like to take that Madeira view with me.'

Chapter VIII

We were soon reclining in our rock settees and Belle having fed the ring-tailed cats and placed some food down for her birds, came in all smiles and a few minutes later in came Jack likewise wearing his best smile and reported If anything better than yesterday. Miss Seymour could dive quite well and had been down twice alone and had made six dives during the day without a Hitch. We all waited for Buck. After a few pensive moments and a few puffs on his cigar Buck began Well folks he said we had the time of our lives discovered two wrecks, the last one we sampled, and here are the results. On the table he laid a small old fashioned beaten copper Box likewise a cameo gold brooch, two silver coins two old rusty swords and an old flint locker blunder-bus, but of course it took us a long time to cut our way through the old oak ship into the cabin where these articles were found. We likewise – Not We cousin please interupted belle, Excuse me he continued, I also made friends with a large black shark, and I stretched out my hand to pat his head which was quite close to me at the time, but to-morrow I will feed him, he has an affectionate look in his two protruding eyes and he went away with a three foot smile and

seemed to be wearing the most lovely set of teeth I ever saw. Here everybody roared even Belle and old Baba were forced to join in. I mean to saddle him up and ride him to Majunga before I am through with this.

Everybody examined the two old silver pieces which had been handed to me by old Baba as the result of the days work at the old wormeaten ship. All the silver coigns showed was a head, we could read something like Reys. And came to the conclusion it was an old Portuguese piece of money. The cameo brooch in a pretty antique hand worked gold frame called for the most attention. Belle declared she had seen one before, worn by her old aunt who had married a Texan at San Angelo Texas, as she and her mother went to visit the old Lady with her mother. Her old Anty wore the brooch and told her it had been given her by her husband, who's father was a soldier under Dallas and Austin and had been captured at the battle of San Asinto from Santa Anna the Mexican General whom they had defeated and taken prisoner. Yes Belle, but that silver coign is certainly older than Texas, as the ship is made of oak and is as old as the Islands, it is perfectly honeycomed by insects but the wood is still strong. I turned the coigns and broach over to Belle I could see she was fond of them. Belle continuing said Santa Anna was a millionair and she had no doubt the broach might have been in his family many years. She

was reluctant to take the cameo from me without I promised to take something in return. I wanted nothing but she went to her cave and came back with two diamonds pure river stones, which she had bought from a gambler down on his luck. She had them valued by the Indian jeweller in Zanzibar and he had offered her £200 for them I would not accept them as they were worth at least four times the price but Red-Indian like she forced me to accept them.

Buck and I retired first as usual leaving the other folks listening to Old Babas Arab stories whch sounded very much of the Old Arabian Knights. Rain fell during the night and stilled the sea so that there was a dead calm and the thud of the beach surf being absent, perfect quiet lent an air of peace. The next three days Buck and I spent in examining old wrecks but beyond a few old guns and an old fashioned signet ring and a few rusty weapons we discovered nothing of importance so we spent most of our time visiting the Islands and taking an occasional dive, and soon became quite accustomed to the suits.

The Dow now returned for more silver and had on board two new customers. They spent most of the day with us, paid in their gold and departed, promising to return and take the remaining cases of the metal. They would not be away more than 5 or 6 days at the most, as business was good. They sailed away after having had a long conversation with Baba. We spent

the rest of the day in amusing ourselves. Johnson playing the guitar which sounded heavenly carried away with the cave winds and concluded a game of seven up just as the schooner hove in.

She was a good sight and the birds and the cats which were now accustomed to us stalked round leisurely waiting for Belle. The birds would now feed from her hand, but the golden hewed black ring tails were shy. Good news as usual from smiling Jack was reported and logged, we were surely a happy family. We had not quit the Idea of finding anything of importance, but it was a difficult undertaking, and Buck and I determined to take out old Baba and go treasure seeking and above all we were going to find queen Sheba if possible as Baba Kara had told us that all the Arabs believed she was somewhere on Pyramid Island. We provided ourselves with bars and other handy tools and chistles from the *Omoru* and we departed on our errand after bidding the pearl fishers good-buy.

We had a large shell sieve with us as we wanted to see if there were any stray treasures buried or scattered on the floor of the pyramid. We arrived at our destination all well and following Baba who said he had been in the first chamber, we commenced to clime the face of the Island it was quite a climb as it was steep and pushing some bushes aside at the end of small flat plateau we came to a large hole in the rock there was good footing so we had no difficulty in descending now

we came to stone steps hewn in the rock and lighting a strong ships lamp we discovered we were in a large wide cave with a level floor and high roof we examined the walls first and discovered chisel marks and on close examination found deep scratching which after cleaning up showed they represented birds and animals but were not carved so we could make out no results for our pains we continued along searching the walls but the scratchings were very crude we now tried the floors and were more successfull. We found a copper chisle and several pieces of ancient pottery as well as an old native adze but it was so eaten with rust that it was worthless to us. We wanted to find the Queen of Sheba as Baba declared she was here somewhere in the island.

We had no luck that day but on removing a small mound and a pile of loose lime stones we found a passage way into another cave not so large as the last one but more shapely. There were no scratchings on the wall but the place was ventilated but we could see no signs of where the vent was, although we searched diligently. The big drawback was a creeper like ivy which clung to the sides of the cave being held firmly to the wall by a small hand like that of a cammeolion, this was ubiquitous and as it was difficult to tear from the walls we made small progress. At last we were rewarded Hobalong shouted Ship Ahoy cap and we all ran to look at the find.

It was an oblong opening about four feet high and seven feet long and we all helped to clean off the rock and found the opening had been built by long square chisseled stones, which were so well cut that they fitted quite closely together without cement and these courses of stone were properly bonded. Baba now offered to bet 10 to one it was Sheba. But Buck and I offered to wager the same amount it was not. In fact Buck offered to bet it was only a passage into another cave, and that the Island had been used for a fort. It was getting late so we decided to make for home.

Conversation

'Inside? Certainly, Ma'am. This rain gives a semblance of autumnal chill to old bones. A fire'd sure be genial. It's what we never see in our house of sorrows.

'I've got a good bit about curios to-day. There's no walk of life that doesn't provide material for literature. Even the worst'll come in handy, with a bit of camouflage for the susceptibilities.

'I've had some acquaintance with antiques . . . Excuse me, but that's a noble beer-jug you've got on the mantelpiece. That's Spode. A good'un. George Bussy'd a' liked that. Beer was beer in those days. None of your nips and tots, so-called by a teetotal generation that's afraid to wipe the froth off its nose. A draught for a gentleman! Oh, aye, antiques . . .

'Easy as winking to supply me old ship with some – as long as you don't overdo it. I could a' put bags o' golden ducats or an emerald cross belonging to the old navigators of Spain. But I've got reality to think of unless it's a book for lads.

'Not but that the old Spaniards *did* come round that way. Had a notion of getting to the land of cloves and rubies. Opals and cinnamon . . .

'How would you care for the notion of finding one o' those old fellers on the Chesterfields? There's no doubt they'd use a group like that, whether for mischief or for commerce who can say?

'The rich robes o' the Church and his hands crossed on his breast . . .

'Aye, and he'll be clasping his rosary! I'll make it a choice one, fit for a prince of the church. Emeralds and pearls paint in well if you let your pen go a bit . . . Four or five large emeralds set in pearls for a background . . .

'But it'll not be a pyramid, same as you told me you'd buried an Egyptian in for literary purposes.[1] We'll have something less common. Anybody can see the Egyptians were conversant with Africa long before we were. Look at the harps of my Pangues – aren't they the sounding image of an Egyptian harp? Come to

[1] Mr. Horn is alluding to the book I was writing when we first arrived; in which, as he says, an Egyptian is buried for literary purposes.

that, wasn't there a road led over the desert to Egypt from immemorial times? Oh, aye, that old highway took more than this feller Rider Haggard to make it. Goes up to the Libyan desert just on the corner there. Joins the old caravan route. Sheba's people used it regularly.

'I thought of discovering Sheba's tomb at one time but there's no knowing what her religion was. And that'll be an obstacle. A bit of religion'll always touch the heart, rightly worked in. The Catholic Church has always provided a panorama for the eye plus food for the heart. There's no heart in Sheba. To tell you the truth, all Eastern women're lacking in the heart. Nothing but a spectacle, same as Cleopatra.

'Who's to say it couldn't be a Spanish lady we're about to discover in her long rest so-called? Her hands crossed on her breast and clasping a rosary.

'Aye, they had to leave her there, poor thing. *She'd* never see Spain again! The Gordlequiver . . . Lattices and lovers . . . Her old duenna and so forth. I could work in a picture of the Alhambra there, same as Washington Irving did. Lovely fretwork and Moorish arches. Pretty as a wedding cake.

'She'd be wife of the commander of the expedition. *She'd* not be left behind! A plucky young woman of high birth, naturally she'd go where her husband goes.

'It's Belle Seymour that'll find her. I'll let that girl be the first to come across the coffin.

'Easy to introduce a stone coffin . . . Metamorphic sandstone.

'Aye, Belle will be the one. High-bred Indian girl, brought up strictly R. C, by the *padres*, she'll be deeply impressed by the shape of the sparkling cross in that dim cave. Somewhat startled, she'll hold back . . . Naturally her breath comes quick. And then she'll cross herself and drop to her knees like a child, whispering a prayer for the dead . . . A beautiful scene. Literary *or* cinema, it touches the heart. Faro expert or not, a good girl like Belle Seymour'll not forget her religious training. It's in the blood, Sundays or weekdays. A religion that's only suitable for Sundays'll not go far. Look at Sinclair,[1] afraid to put his nose in a joss-house for fear of insult to the Presbyterians.

'You should see confession here on a Saturday night if you want to see a practical religion in full working order. Packed with fellers getting the week's work off their minds. But they'll start happy again on Monday morning, which is what I've never seen a Presbyterian do. His sins turn sour in the stomach and Sunday's merely accelerated his gloom. Get rid o' guilt and the world'll shine.

'That's why Mexico's a happy place. Every *pueblo's* a getaway if you're R. C. Sanctuary's what I'd call it. Always a priest . . . Bell ringing the angelus and the sun shining. None of these agnostics there. Fellers'd

[1] The Scots trader in Vol. I of the Horn books.

deny that the sun's in the sky while it's laffing in their faces. They'll not perturb the Great Onlooker any quicker than they can scratch their names on the sun.

'I've introduced Santa Anna for effect. Gives the story a touch of the truth.

'Ma'am? Certainly not. I'm alluding to Santa Anna,[1] the well-known Mexican general. I never heard he'd any relations given over the philosophy. When he was beaten they made him pay a million pesos. Then they caught him again and made him pay another million. I never heard there was any philosophy in the family. Taken all in all, a poor sort of feller, hampered by his Latinity.

'Too much money talk in warfare nowadays. Nothing but a system of ledgers and daybooks. These so-called charters! . . . If Cecil Rhodes had lived fifty years earlier he'd a' had to go about it same as Dallas and Austin did. When Rhodes got a common hankering after land, they called it vision. Camouflage your freebootery with charters and it'll pass as patriotism.

'Oh, aye, in the earlies the only way to take another feller's country was with the cutlass. Couldn't get out of your fighting obligations with charters. The only way you got out of a fight, if ever you got into one, was to fight like blazes. Meet the other feller close as a long-lost brother.

[1] I was never certain whether this name was the same as the philosopher's or not.

'Well, Ma'am, I must leave this hearth sooner or later or I shall be outstaying me welcome. It's a considerable time since I've had a right to sit by a fire.

'Excuse me criticising your home but you've got some good things here . . . Those cows look to me like Cuyp.[1] Dutch feller, knew country scenes well. Understood the physiognomy of a cow. Could paint country panoramas as they really are, same as Goldsmith. Quietude and no sensation. Like you see on the Norfolk Broads.

'Tuke[2] was very fond of the Norfolk Broads. Always painting 'em for mere pleasure. Used to live with us at one time in London. Very fond o' the baby, used to wheel the perambulator. Always a bit tipsy but nothing more than he needed as an incentive to the brush.

'Well, I'll leave you to your fire now, Ma'am. But I mustn't forget a few further notes I have about the shooting of Aderley. Buck Johnson comes to me with his head in his hands and says "Horn, Aderley was a fool. You'll never do a Cherokee. The Indian side is haunting her heart . . . she'll never forgive an insult." Aye, the half-breed has two natures, but once they're jealous they become pure Indian. For milder feelings you must look to the English side.

[1] This was positively startling to me, who had cherished the little old picture because my father had always regarded it as a painting by Cuyp. Like the hardy Englishman he is, Mr. Horn pronounces it Kipe.

[2] The well-known painter of late Victorian times.

'Then I've had some serious notions of pushing in a pirate episode for natural effect. That feller I used to know, Baba Kara . . . A notable pirate and slaver at one time, although if the truth were known a Liverpool man . . . Made his money in the Chesterfield Islands. Did it by sitting still in the sun there with his cheroot and sending the other fellers were in with him to pillage the high seas.

'Aye, there'd be three or four dhows carrying a cargo o' women and eunuchs consigned to Zanzibar and they'd find themselves signed for by Baba Kara on his island instead. There was a big pirate centre up the coast there called Anos-i-bey [?]. "Beautiful resting-place" it means. Slaves were sent on to Mocha from there.

'Anos-i-bey . . . There's music in a name like that. Beautiful resting-place . . . All the young ones were sent on to Mocha from there.

'No, Oxford doesn't chase the nigger out of a man. Look at the Sultan.[1] A big slaver. Oxford or no Oxford he followed the old stream. A man from high society with a high collar on, but he'd never put the traffic down. He'd get drawn in by the forces of nature. Flotsam in a strong stream, titled monarch though he was.

'A successful feller, Baba Kara, one time. But lacking in scruples. And of course, come to the Persian

[1] Mr. Horn is speaking of one of the past sultans, not the present one.

Gulf,[1] where he moved up afterwards . . .There's no denying that the barrier reef there's a godsend to any slaver who likes to take the advantage offered by Nature.

'I'll say good day, Ma'am. That sure is a fine piece of Spode you've got there. A handsome ornament, although it'll never taste beer again.'

[1] Mr. Horn probably meant to say Guardafui.

Chapter IX

We arrived a little late and the *Omoru* had beaten us. Belle was feeding her pets and had two new comers that had left their nest and looked to Buck like two snow balls with beaks and small legs. We had worked hard and enjoyed our supper after which we related our days experience and Belle said she wondered who it could be.[1] Baba said Sheba and Belle said that was possible but Buck always warred with his cousin and disagreed but after a long argument Belle said she wanted to be there when the wall was opened. This we all agreed to and as Jack had decided to leave most of his men to wash and stack the shells on the morrow and to put the rest of his crew to sponge cutting, we all agreed to go with him as Baba said he heard there was plenty of fine corral and fancy shells to be got and all kinds of plants to be seen on the sea bottom.

We all rose early and after the mate had put the men to work cleaning sorting and stacking shells we under the supervision of Captain Obalong sailed to the sponge beds but as these were shallow reefs we used our large cattamerans for diving. We all enjoyed the fun but Belle had found a grotto, so she called it, it was surely

[1] The dead in the tomb described by them.

pretty, being built of coral rock and we brought up some beautiful shells, some of the smaller ones being edable the corral varied in colour and as the water was very clear we were well rewarded for our visit small aquatic plants grew from the sides of the grotto, they were all of the small order, but most of them lost their original colour and beauty after having been brought up to the surface. The rocks swarmed with small fish of all kinds and the silver and gold coloured flashes from their reflecting bodies gave the scene quite a fairy land appearance. Baba Buck and I now returned to the schooner. There we spent the rest of the day a most delightful day listening to Bucks guitar smoking and merry making. We were quite amused by Belle who was now diving with out the divers suite and used the weight. She declared this to be much better as the water covering the reef was warm, and her bathing costume she thought would frighten away the sharks.

The following day was passed much in the same way. On returning to camp, however we were followed in by Babas Dow. They had had the good luck to change their silver in two markets. This of course was good news but they reported Abdul Kader a famous sea robber pirate and slaver to be on the coast and had made a raid on a village near the port of Tuillar. He was well known and dreaded. The mate had heard of him and he had seen his large Dow in the Persian Gulf.

So Jack kept the Swivels ready for him should he show which he thought was not likely. But we would run no risks and always kept our rifles and ammunition handy we were well armed and had nothing to fear from him and his crew of cutthroats providing we were not taken by surprise. So we kept a good look out for anything like a Dow appearing on the scene as Baba declared he knew the Chesterfields and would no doubt keep away from the coast where, if seen anywhere near big market towns, he would be reported by swift cattemerans to Majunga.

Early next day the dow sailed away having purchased nearly all Bucks silver for gold dust. We all decided to stay with the *Omoru* in case of danger and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves as before, returning early to the bank where the shells were being piled, so as to have plenty of time to measure each pile and ascertain about how many tons we had.

We had just finished our days work when a large quick sailing Dow turned the point of the island and dropped anchor close inshore about a mile from us she dropped her huge sail and anchored. She was flying the cresent. The boys who had been working the shell swarmed on board the *Omoru* in a Jiffy and the cattemerans had already cleared off inside the Islands. With the field glass I saw a boat put off from the Dow, which Baba Cara solemnly declared was the pirates. Six men now walked hurriedly across the sand bank

and soon arrived they looked Innocent enough but asked insolently if I had a permit from the Sultan of Zanzibar to take away his shells as the islands belonged to him. He spoke good English. I answered him politely saying No. I am sorry he said, I have papers to show that my captain represents the Sultan and we shall be obliged to take a fair half of the shells. These islands I replied belong to the British Government and have done for many years, by right of discovery by Capt. Chesterfield. I forbid you to touch them. I shall have to obey the orders of my Captain he said and I shall take four baskets of samples in the name of the sultan. If you touch my shells I shall shoot you I replied. He paid no attention to my warning picked up a large shell and I immediately pulled out my gun on him and shot the shell from his hand.

The fun had commenced. The men with their four baskets now went at racing spead towards the dow, Whilst the Dow opened the Ball with volleys from their long rifles. And they began to spat the sand bank but we were out of range. The mate had all ready our anchor was raised without any fuss. We were soon under full sail the Dow following suit. I made for the open so as to avoid as much of the Dows fire as possible. And then turning due north I had the dow behind me. I gave the word Jack opened up steadily I took the glasses and watched results, the first shell was a hit and had entered his focksul the second shell hit the dow just

below the first, the next shot was a little high but splintered the cabin lookout from which the long Arab rifles were being used and caused them to cease firing. Jack continued to pop the shells home so that her prow began to take on a sickly appearance. By this time being the best sailor of the two combating boats we were well away so we took things easy. I now turned the trick on the Arab pirate and swiftly changing our course due west we had his side showing well up whilst we were well out of range.

The mate now got busy and peppered her deck and then after hitting him just above water line a dozen times or more the Pirate hauled down his flag and sailed eastward. Belle who had been standing near Jack, now begged to fire the next shot. We all laughed but I told Jack to let her have a go by all means. The mate laid the gun she took the line and fired, and as luck would have it landed a shell in the stern of the Pirates ship. We all cheered whilst the crew danced with delight she landed a second shell on the deck house splinters flying in all directions.

We now decided to let him go as there was no danger of him troubling us again for quite a while, whilst we had the days fun of our lives. And wishing the poor pirate better luck on his next visit we were soon bowling along towards our cave. The long toms were sponged and covered. I gave Jack a hearty shake and Belle gave him a good hugg. The boys who had all done

their best during the engagement we gave two extra totts of rum, whilst we all laughed and drank to the health of our friend the Pirate everytime we thought of him.

Conversation

'I've conjured up a bit of sea fighting for a rest from the scenery. It'll come in useful for cinema *plus* providing the reader with a little sensation. Cinemas'd never look at a story that's all grotto, however beautiful the fishes are. There's always commonhood to be considered. What they're after is spectacular. No little socialist ever held any affection for Nature. Too deeply occupied with thinking about himself.

'A gentleman's pleasure, Nature. Diving in the morning sea. Lying to dry yourself on the rocks and staring down in the water that's full of moving objects of colour. And there's fellers'll prefer Victoria Street, Westminster, when there's the world of Nature waiting to be seen ! Bugle all glorious apparitions of Nature in their ears and they'll think it's a dream or madness. They can only stand it in these cinemas.

'Socialists! They've no notions of life except to upset Nature's ruling. Aye! But while old Sol reflects a glint on earth we can make all sorts of intrinsic laws but the laws of Nature *plus* the sea are always the same and care for no little agitators. Give way to Nature and there'll be peace again. If stopping wars and so

on's going to cause such a commotion better give way to the old routine.

'When you can introduce sterling honesty into Westminster the millennium'll not be far behind. It'll all come right – no need to wait for universal Christianity. Too ambitious a notion, that. Universal goodness should be the bull's eye. And near enough the mark for all thinking men.

'Aye, until we come to the point when we achieve sincerity of purpose we shall not be able to cut down the navy. Why, every Mameluke in the East'd be after us! England without a navy up to full strength'd be like a fish that's lost its tail. Lose your steering gear, whether in real life or only morals and you're done for.

'The navy plus the mercantile marine provides a grand bodyguard for any island. Talk of the Great Wall of China – it couldn't skim after an enemy same as a ship or a seabird. No life in it for protective purposes. What isn't mobile will be overcome in time.

'Aye, the mercantile marine . . . Even to-day a British ship'll always give you asylum. No admirals on board with lace and frogging, just a plain sea-captain. But on the King's water he's king of his kingdom, and that's a ship of the British mercantile. Sanctuary, that's what it is for any Britisher that's in trouble or worse. Why, I've had asylum twice myself in a moment

of necessity. "Hinder not, let this man pass without let or hindrance at your peril." The old English passport on the high seas.

'The British ship *B* – . No sooner on deck than up goes the flag – "Asylum."

'I had a glass with the skipper and he says "*You're* all right. Don't worry. We know all about you." There was even a French officer on board, but he could do nothing to assert his country's rights with that flag overhead. They wired from Madagascar to the Portuguese to stop me at Lourenço Marques but the British consul there said I was in transit.

'Aye, they could do nothing . . . Nice feller, Roger Casement. He gave me a comfortable escort over the border into Swaziland. En route for England, home and duty, as they say . . .

'Wanted to stop me for a dangerous character. *Ikorna* dangerous character! Quite a little furore because they thought I'd been helping the Malagassies to train for war against the French. Laffable . . .

'The danger to the French in the colonies can only come from their own inefficiency. Would fellers go gun-running etcetra and so forth in the precincts of any man who wasn't *homo stultus?* When an officer'll demean himself wasting useful hours in the boudoir of a so-called *maîtresse*, he mustn't be surprised when manlier fellers take such opportunities of expansion as may offer themselves. If I'd taken a *maîtresse* round in

me portmanteau to all the spots I've studied for me country's good, I shouldn't have made the progress I did.

'Aye, women . . . They surely anchor you to the inferior life. 'Tis a safe instinct of Nature to leave the female at the fireside. When that instinct is violated it'll only lead to confusion of principles. Look at the years I wasted trying to settle down to common dulness in Scotland Yard . . . Or Sinking to the level o' selling Bartolozzis in an antique shop just because I had to make life square with the fact of my marriage to that young girl. Did it do me any good to shadow fellers were battling out for their manhood? Stealing from Thames lighters and so on. Nay, Ma'am, they were nearer to natural manhood than I was that was trying to get down to the level of a woman's safety.

'Those Portuguese . . . Fussing about when they landed me in a most comical manner. Guns and uniforms galore, and they march me off under escort to the British consul.

'The way they kept step was laffable . . .

' 'Twas Roger Casement helped me out of the impasse. Looks me up and down . . . Aye, and I looked at him! Does you good to meet the eye of a gentleman at all times. But never more so than when you've been suffering from an overdose of Latinity.

'Oh, aye, he looked at me . . . A great heart for

defiance, that feller. British consul at the time, and a thorough gentleman. Said I was in transit . . . Sent me off with a safe escort to the border.

'They hanged him in the ultimate . . .[1]

' "Twas a blot on the scutcheon of history when England put a rope round a manly neck. In the Tower of London, too, that's used to the sword and the axe for gentlemen prisoners. Making a filthy Tyburn of a legendary spot'd always known how to treat a man of breeding.

' 'Tis a gentleman's right to expect a bullet in the heart for political misdemeanours. Contamination with a bloody hangman, excuse me, is what no fine spirit'll tolerate. What? The same rope round Casement's neck that's used for fellers can only torture poor women by way of manly adventure? See 'em die in a bath . . . Cut up their insulted bodies to push 'em in a box . . . A devil's game hanging's too merciful for! and then punish the natural crime of high treason in the same way?

'Come to high treason as such, there's many speaking in Parliament at this moment're better qualified for the traitor's death than Casement. These so-called Englishmen'll talk polite to a barbarous country like Russia in the holy name of Labour. Labour! That's never

[1] Sir Roger Casement was hanged for high treason in the Tower of London during the Great War. It is many years since he was British consul at Lourenço Marques.

done a hand's turn in their lives. Die of grief if they had to make a toastfork or a lampshade . . .

'What was Casement but a romantic gentleman suffering from a hereditary tribal quarrel on his conscience, same as any other Irish gentleman? Not a surly feller like a bull in a field, looking for a quarrel with all passers-by, although his stomach's full and he can lie in the sun.

'A bull is the most ignorant of animals, and that's why he's a danger to civilization. No notion of diplomacy, same as a lion has. A mannerless feller.

'Politics is a question of manners, George Bussy always said. Let manners go and you'll do more damage to the constitution than Guy Fawkes with his ten barrels of gunpowder.

'Well, Ma'am, getting on to politics doesn't write the book . . .

'Certainly . . . I'll occupy myself with a smoke while you go inside.'

. . . . . .

'How do you like my notion of Belle Seymour firing the disabling shot? Always looks well to see a lady in an heroic action. And when it's done with a twist of the pen and no expense . . .

'A bit o' piracy on the high seas'll always be a draw. Aye, there's no philanthropy on the high seas! 'Twas the search for gold brought me to this . . . asking a lady for a box of matches . . .

'There's no gold on the high seas. Man's no more than a bird there. Light pocket, light heart and wings stretched above you to catch the wind. Holding your own on the high seas'll be honourable to the end, which is Davy Jones' locker.

'My turn soon if I stay here much longer. I'm not looking forward to it. Davy Jones' coffin'd fit me better than what these little undertakers could measure me for. 'Tis world-wide, and that's more homely for roamers. Less unseemly struggling when the bugle sounds. Nothing but your spirit and some clean shell-dust that once was your intimate skeleton. The fishes'll see to that, that give a man cleaner burial than all the worms conjured up by Knox and those fellers. And the wash and wear on the bed of the ocean . . . Oh, aye, when you've been occupied in salvage for a living, you get familiar with the landmarks.

'Salvage work . . . The most fruitful place in the world for wrecks, Guardafui . . .

'After I'd been up in Abyssinia I got up that way. Ran me own boat and did very well with it. Charged about half the cost of the wreck before I'd touch her. Paid me own divers, of course.

'There's some grand secrets of life to be found at Guardafui. Secrets of the sea *plus* the desert. If you're gifted with romance you'll hear the voice of history in the wind there, if anywhere on this terrestrial globe. A place always been notable for bloody violence.

'The veiled women, destined for a harem, poor things . . . The dangers of the desert are past but there's the Persian Gulf with all its traps and snares, human and natural.

'Come to that, the history of wrecking alone'd furnish material for a black page in the chronicles of crime, so-called . . . "With the Wreckers of Guardafui." That'd be an attractive title for a book.

'There's not a pattern of any boat that's not to be found off Guardafui. Waiting for Michael to blow his bugle that'll summon all seafarers in the ultimate. Ships and men, it'll sure be a fine apparition of the past when Guardafui delivers up its dead.

'Why, they know when you're leaving Zanzibar that you're coming! From time immemorial a well thought out system of wrecking. Spies and outposts and sentries, same as for any other kind of a living.

'On the barrier reef of Cape Guardafui – wealth untold.

' "Beware the false light" – that's what it means. Guardafui . . .

'Well, Ma'am, I mustn't give way to gossip. But I often think of me opportunities lost. That old major with his methylated [1] they've pushed into my room's

[1] Methylated spirits, the poor man's whisky. Often mixed with buttermilk.

been worrying me with his shouts. You get seasons of regret when the mind harps on the past, if you live in a cemetery like that house of our's.'

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Chapter X

We reached our cove just before sunset. Belles birds and cats were still waiting. After supper we all felt in humer for a jollification. Buck provided the music Belle gave us many choice songs with the voice of a larke, we all sang and even old Baba Cara gave us a Jig, it was after midnight when we turned in, and it was late when the *Omoru* wheighed anchor for the shell workers. We all went along but Miss Seemore and Capt Hobolong took full charge of the ship and the diving. Whilst we had periodical laughs at the crazy pirate who came for half the shell. The boys especially Obolong understanding the cause of our meriment laughed heartily. We returned early to the cave but had no one claiming the sultans half that evening.

We made several more trips to the shell banks as the mate was anxious to bank our load of shell up to forty tons. Belle found another corral Fairyland near the sponge beds but although it was lovely in the extreme I really liked the grotto we had visited first much better. We donned our suits and helmets and as the water was clear as crystal had a good view of our surroundings. There were tall branches of corral trees which reminded me of a petrified forest I had seen in Colorado but of

course they were not large trees the tallest being about six feet high the branches took on a staghorn appearance, there were several grottos and the common feather fern and plenty of them reminded me of a peacock's tail. These looked exceedingly pretty whilst I could see Belle doing great execution amongst the larger variety with a small bar. They broke readily and several quite large trunks, some eighteen inches in circumference lay on the sea floor, whilst fish of various kinds swarmed around. Once in a while a six-footer would glide past but the larger sort kept their distance. Several giant sunfish would dart past, halting if they espied a small fish they thought would be toothsome. The variagated colours of the corral plants and the fish which were ever in motion and casting glints of every shade and colour, amber gold green cobalt cardinal violet etc, reflections of the sun of course, made the seen look one of indescribable beauty, but to me it looked like a too richly coloured oil painting and was fatiguing to the eye. I prefer natural colours.

I returned to the schooner with Buck and we left Belle who never seemed to tire in her love for what could be seen on the pretty corral banks. We found business moving as usual. Jack had several shells over two feet long whilst one measured two feet nine inches the largest I ever had seen since we arrived on the banks. We returned to the sand banks and spread out our catch in the suns hot rays for the last time as Jack

had assured me we had our forty tons and more and as the mother of pearl market was now at its height we decided to sell our catch as soon as possible. This was good news as it would require a day or two for the shells to open and be ready for cleaning. We all decided in the meanwhile to visit Pyrimid Island and go through it and find the World-talked of Sheba if possible. The evening was spent in amusing ourselves whilst the history of Poor Queen Sheba was of course the main topic of our conversation, whilst much amusement was caused by Babas stories of Arab life and manners which he said were not so primitive as people thought. The rank and file of the desert Arabs, once you lived amongst them you would find were honest simple men but of course these were easily aroused to bloodshed by their leaders, who were mostly holy men like Paka Pasha, who of course knew their religious code as he could speak reade and write their language perfectly. It was not considered out of the way to rob or kill a Christian especially those who were known to be averse to the religion of Mahomet. So certain was Carrol of finding Sheba in the island that the old man was up early on that memorable morning. We boarded the *Omoru* on board of which was a well stocked locker with all the tools we needed for our purpose.

We anchored in a cove not far from Pyramid Island, and taking ten of our best boys with us also tools and refreshments, we followed Baba. After a steep climb

we came to the enterance, took a rest and a reviver and lighting our ships lamps we entered the cave. The mate and Belle examined the scratchings on the walls but like us could make out nothing legibal. Just like the old Indian picture writing said Belle but not so well done. Not satisfied and thinking there might be more enterances than one we searched dilegently and being satisfied there was no other opening but the one we had discovered we passed into the next cave. We had a splendid view of the sides of the cave as well as the well shaped dome as we had four of our best ships lamps. We looked along the walls but could see no indications of any openings. Belle gave the word and we commenced to remove the large bricks like rocks which were well keyed and difficult to remove. The mate eventually loosened them up and a second course and third and fourth were removed with great care.

I now took a hand relieving Jack and loosened one of the sides and telling every one to keep back I lifted the rocks carefully with the curved punch end of the bar and down came nearly all the rest of the wall. As the dust cleared away the glaring light of the large lamps held close show the corpse of a young lady dressed it seemed in a dark slightly blue velvet robe her face was extremely pretty and was lifelike and not discoloured whilst her hair was clasped to the forehead by a band of gold woven material and was in the best of preserv-

ation. Her hands were crossed just below her waste whilst on her brest was a large jewelled golden crusfix. I reach out my hand to examine this but Belles hand drew my arm back. For Gods sake Captain she said dont touch that cross and dont please I beg of you lay hands on that poor Christian girl, somebodys child left alone in a foreign and desolate island. I stepped back from the nitch and stood behind Belle who was now nealing on the debri with her head bent and hands clasped saying in Spanish the prairs for the dead. We all felt greatly moved by the scene. Old Baba lay prone on the ground mahomedin style whilst we all bowed our heads in reverance. After Belle had finished her prayer she stood up and begged of us to build the opening up. This of course was the proper thing and we all took a hand. The stones were not difficult to build up they were cleaned by handling and gently taping them down as well as we could we had soon built up the opening. We had a little difficulty with the last layer but this was soon overcome. We now made from the cave and on reaching the other side had soon found that the stones that had originally blocked up the enterance were in the loose debri we soon unearthed them and built up that entrance. Belle thanked us all saying that was a kindly action.

We left the cave and were relieved when we reached the deck of the *Omoru*. And that was the last I heard mentioned of Sheba or Pyramid Island. On reaching

our home in the cave we passed a quiet day, discussing only future events. Belle showed her usual whit and good humor and the world smiled as usual. The mate and I now decided to make for Majunaga and the next two days the boys were put to loading shell. Our furniture was taken from the cave and bidding good buy to the Old Chesterfields where we had put in such a beautiful holliday we set sail for Majunga. Cherokee Belle as usual took the wheel and after a beautiful trip we reached the old city about noon. But Belle concluded to stay on board till morning and so did Buck. Even old Baba Kara stayed with us and we had quite a jolification which was intrupted by the British Consul coming on board and bringing us our letters. He wished me to visit him early next day as there was a gentleman he wished me to see on very important business.

The mate and I thought it curious that Miss Seymour should prefer our company, furthermore she told her cousin that she expected to see Aderley on the *Omoru*. Many a man she hinted would have come to meet her under the circumstances. Her cousin said nothing but smiled. The mate and I left early for the consuls office, leaving the rest of the folks preparing for their departure. Johnson told me he had received good news, and thrust a letter he had received into my hand, saying Cap I am staying with you and shall remove all my duds lock stock and barrel from the Greeks and

stow them away on board we shook on the luck whilst Belle smiled. I had understood.

We were soon at the consuls and were introduced to a short bull dog face stout little gent, Capt Sykes of H.M.S. Decoy. Suppose you gentlemen join me in a bottle he said smiling. A bottle of moet and shandon was brought in with cigars. Capt Smith I congratulate you on killing that arch rascall at the Chesterfields. I have been on his track for some time he said. This is news to me sir I said I put a dow out of action I think but had no idea anyone was killed, of course it was quite possible. I related the incident he turned to the mate and reaching out his paw he said I shall thank you, Mr Stanley on behalf of the navy until I can make you a better recognition of your services. The mate smiled. Yes Capt he continued the famous pirate and arch scoundrell was killed, so a prisoner relates, by the last shot (Belle's shot, I said to myself) whilst there were many more killed and wounded on the dow when I picked her up the morning after your encounter with her.

Continuing he said Now this is the plan of campaign for the future. Proceed as soon as possible to Zanzibar, keep Baba Kara or Collins[1] with you, as I have every reason to believe he was an eyewitness of the wrecking of the *Princess of India*. Packa Pasha or Parker, an old deserter from the R N, was the wrecker. He is the

[1] Carrol?

man we want. He has already sailed for Zanzibar with that dancing girl the Pretty Georgian who was on board the *Princess of India* when she was sunk. Myself and other representatives of the R N will meet you at the British Consulate in Zanzibar. Here are your instructions, Pleas call as soon as you arrive. I promised to do my best according to the instructions handed to me.

Capt Sykes R N now left after another drink and a shake. And walked out of the office briskly. After a few more words with the consul we left for the Walker office and Buck returned on board the schooner with his shell buyer who was an Austrian, most of the large shells went to Austria and Bavaria. He was delighted when we showed him the fair samples and offered us £250 per ton for one half and £150 for the second half where he said the shells would be weighed on arrival by Walkers Agent. I left the deal to Jack who told me it was a fair price. We returned to Walkers Office. And signed the agreement and Walker promised to provision the *Omoru* at once which he did. On returning on board we found Buck stowing away his belongings He had been drinking and insisted on me joining him. The mate then paid off the Mallagash boys who went away delighted, and Jack got busy making all ready for sailing. Miss Seymore and Aderley were leaving for Zanzibar that night and would be there on our arrival. There was a great Mahomedan festival to take place and of course Aderley would do a big

gambling business during the time as all trading was suspended until Rammadan was over. We all visited the consul, Baba Kara included and after calling on our agent saw Belle and Aderley. Belle felt delighted to hear she would see us all so soon, with fond Adiews we left the famous Hotel, Johnny the Greeks. Our business was over, we all returned to the good *Omoru*, and set sail at once for the Old Cosmopolitan City of Zanzibar. And were soon out again on the Indian Ocean, bowling along in high glee with nothing on our minds but our hats and as Buck put it every scoundrel onboard pardoned and as free as the birds that followed in our wake.

Conversation

'Well, Ma'am, I've done me best with the grotto scenery. Should provide a beautiful spectacle in a cinema but for reading you'll have to sharpen it up somewhat.

'I can *see* the Chesterfields, but at my age I can't keep what I'm thinking about . . . The alchemy of the brain when you're at the allotted span may still conjure up some interest for the world. Aye, I can think or weep, but the vision flies away of the beautiful sights I've seen. You must try to seize it for me. Get your pencil, Ma'am, and try for the crying seabirds wheeling in a sky of blue. The seals flipping away in their happiness. Beautiful spotted seals that trust you to revere

their peace and the happy home they've pegged out for themselves.

'The eye of a seal'll always beg a man for sympathy. He wants to speak to you, if ever a creature did . . . Just let me speak, he says . . .

'When the ear of mankind can catch those dumb words of the brute it'll be the millennium. Respect our lot, they're telling you. Aye, they want to trust you but the world won't let 'em.

'Beautiful to see creatures at peace as God made 'em, whether up my rivers or on the rocks of the Chesterfields. You're seeing what the Great Onlooker saw when He'd finished the week's work . . . Oh, aye, he must 'a smiled when he put the finishing touches to the lemurs. So-called Madagascar cats.

'Even the lemurs get bigger and put on a more lovely tail on an island like that. They've got time to dress themselves pretty in such a spot. Leaping like feathers from ledge to ledge. Nature sure was smiling when she modelled such a little pretty feller from common clay.

'*Plus* the lemurs there'll be jumping fish like living streaks of phosphorus. There's colours in mother-of-pearl that'd match the phosphorence of those fishes . . . We are drawing the reader off the scene a bit, but it's all to the good.

'Get in the sponges – growing a foot below the surface in crystal water blue as the marble baths of Rome.

'Think of the corals, bright red, in water like that!

And when the dying sun's on it all, you certainly think it's a place for nymphs and angels loitering for a holiday. They love a place that's unknown. 'Tis when a place has never been seen that you want to be there. To be unknown is the greatest attribute to beauty. Like one o' those mirages that the clouds conjure up in play – you get there and something's vanished.

"'Tis the *ancientry* of beauty'll give you a start . . . When Hannibal was conjuring his regiment of elephants across the Alps those seals and the lemurs were playing in their happy peace. Aye, the Chesterfields in the earlies must 'a been a spot for Eden itself. 'Tis progress kills the world. Talk of suicide of the race . . . An empty cradle's nothing – a harmless object compared with the cradle rocks an ambitious merchant or a Leopold of Belgium. Factories and slave-owners . . .

'The mighty conceptions of that feller Hannibal . . . And a black man, mind you. As grand a feller as Alexander, seeing that nobody'd ever told him he was black. Aye, innocent of his colour, he faces the Alps with his great concourse of armed elephants and barbarians. A gigantic panorama of primal energy in the days of innocence. *Delenda est Carthago* . . . "Destroy the black man's fortress" is how you've got to read it these days . . . Fellers like my Renchoro, wandering like Ishmaels over their native land . . . A king's son, that boy. Owned a bit o' land the size of Britain.

'Aye, they've got no fortress now, poor fellers. All

they can do is to hide their princes, same as the Shangaans[1] are hiding their's from father to son. Come to that, it's not fortresses you take into battle, it's men. Mobility's the word, not fortresses.

'Ma'am? Nothing but a bit o' common knowledge amongst the old timers that know them well. They're hiding a chief. Legends and prophecies're not going to lose hold on the black races for a donkey's years. They've got to obey their wise men and witch doctors.

'Hiding a chief while political and commercial nobodies deprive them of ancestral land . . .

'When are these native tribes to be given their just due? Render to Cæsar the thing that is Cæsar's was never meant to apply only to emperors. There's Cæsar in every poor savage to whom tribute is due from his fellow-men. He mustn't be given depreciated notes in payment for good land, same as they gave the Red Indians for their oil lands. Aye, there's Cæsar in the poor African who's driven from the spreading hunting-ground bestowed on him by Nature to seek food in the filthy meshes of civilization. When we see the poor feller on a Sunday wandering the streets without a tribe conscience must tell us that we're paying tribute neither to God nor Cæsar.

[1] A native tribe of south-east Africa much drawn on for labour in the gold mines of Johannesburg. They wear a peculiar fringed shawl crossed over tightly at the waist and falling in a straight line to the ankles in a manner reminiscent of ancient Egyptian draperies.

'Now there's this feller Mussolini that's acting the Cromwell in Italy.[1] Talks of wanting Angola for development. Have the Italians ever shown that they can colonise? And now they think it can be learnt by instinct. Following a man like Mussolini . . .

'A cut-throat with cut-throat methods'll never do for getting on with natives. Putting on a black coat like Oliver Cromwell and marching into Africa with it like a toy Hannibal . . . Africa'll take a good look at that bombastical dago and she'll smile. You can't lay down the law to Africa. You've got to follow *her* laws. There's many a lost ruin in Africa left for the monkeys to play in. Play at aping the man, and that's why they're still there. 'Tis only play, and Nature'll never be jealous of play. She'll keep the monkeys to amuse herself.

'A statue of Mussolini in Angola'd look somewhat smaller than life-size. 'Tis the background provides the proportion of dignity or otherwise. Look at the statue of that freebooter Jack Dallas, Texas. It'll pass, against a town. But no man's statue'll look too imposing propped up against Africa. They serve nothing but to tickle the world with romance – Cecil Rhodes or any other feller. Same as Oliver Cromwell provides Romance in Manchester.[2]

[1] I had shown Mr. Horn some newspaper cables about Angola and the Italians.

[1] An allusion to a statue of the Protector which, I understand, is in Manchester.

'Angola . . . I could 'a had a big slice of Angola. I could 'a chased the French out of it if I hadn't kept going to have a look at Lancashire. A lad immune from fever and in league and friendship with the Napoleon of cannibalism[1] . . . A bit of natural conquest would 'a come easy.

'I know Africa in all its twinings. I could 'a made the Lancastrian rose flourish there, with just a little backing from home, same as Rhodes had, and de Brazza. But when a feller goes out to make empire he must turn his back on his parish. 'Tis that going to look at the old nest saps the energy out of a man. We ought to forget it same as Nature meant us to. But you'll find every roamer has some such spot of gold in his heart. 'Tis the fellers stick at home have no sentiment. Stare at you when you leave home, and stare harder when you come back in a moment of softness.

'I was at home in Angola. Always had that *modus operandi* about me that I could follow the edicts of my surroundings. Is man the only animal that can do without the protective colouring offered by a sensible Nature?

'Navigable rivers . . . Minerals . . . And England'll swop 'em for any worthless bit of coast on the globe when the word *entente* is mentioned.

'Copper and iron . . . Aye, and minerals we scarce know the look of . . . Cinnabar and quicksilver . . .

[1] See Volume One, the Pangwe chief Efanginango.

'I should 'a burnt me boats, forgot Lancashire . . .

'I was happy in Angola . . .

'Perhaps there's pardon in the ultimate for all roamers, same as the sailors. The sailor's a man'll be easily pardoned. When you're Catholic you feel the truth of that. He commits every sin that Eve committed when led astray by the serpent but a man works for his rights as a sinner when he makes his living on the sea. As long as he's kindly to his Maker now and then, and says a prayer of thanks for life, he'll come to no great harm in the ultimate. There's no West Coast sailor but owes gratitude for a slice of life money couldn't buy in England.

'Liverpool men! . . . Their skulls may grace the Joss-house but their spirit'll never die. His soul goes marching on through the hostages he left with some black woman – a black figure o' fortune.

'There's few sailors or traders on the old Ivory that went to their last sleep with their heads on. The natives were always on the look-out for good specimens to add to the pile without undue trouble . . . I saw a poor sailor feller'd had too much rum one day. Thought he was getting into bed, but he climbed over the boat's side and struck his head on the swinging anchor as he fell. Dead, of course, when they picked him up, but I caught a look of natural pleasure on some of those Pangwe boys. "One for Isorga" I heard 'em say.

'Aye, their heads went to Isorga, but the results of

Nature's plans're evident in the half-breeds that're running the Sunlight Soap interests up in Nigeria and so on.

'A man'll breed where he stays, and that's one of Nature's laws you can't dodge.

'These millionaires with their so-called interests . . . There's no interest in the world as powerful as a flesh and blood family of half-breeds left in the country by some poor sailor.

'More than half the ships that touched on the West Coast had their wives and families there. You'd see the woman, dressed up in all her best, trotting up to see the captain as soon as he was at anchor. Nice respectable blacks. Innocent as lambs they were and as proud of the children as if there'd been no bar sinister on 'em that'd been derived from an Englishman. How was *she* to know there was a head wife in Liverpool or Birkenhead?

'Oh, aye, when all secrets are known there'll be some black looks in the Liverpool section. As to what behaviour the Great Onlooker will account the limit for a sailor, there's no knowing. But He'll have a bit of pacifying to do before things're straightened out.

'Look at Nigeria – whether it's the old Nigeria Company or Elder Dempster or Sunlight Soap they've had a good breed of half-castes to fall back on for intelligent labour. If Lord Sunlight'd had only the pure savage to find him his oils and his fats, he'd never 'a been

able to cover Nigeria with his one hand as he can to-day.

'The world at this time uses a tremendous lot of soap. Come to that, it's no good sign – look at the Romans, having their hot baths and scented soap shortly before the decline and fall – but we'd still all be using Old Brown Windsor if there'd been no half-castes in Nigeria. The world is reaping the benefit of a sailor's folly.

'You'll find no waste in Nature. Trim it up as you will with tinsel and talk about parrots and monkeys, the open fact remains that the natural man to develop Africa is the half-breed bequeathed by a sailor. The survival of the fittest is nothing new to Providence. He knew the theory all the time and He'll see to it that there'll be some fittest to survive if you leave Him alone.

'British trade on the West Coast is based on the man who's got enough white blood for the sake of intelligence, and enough black blood to help him stand the climate without either drinking or running a fever. He gets the palm oil, he can understand a contract and a bit of clurking and, plus the British flag, he forms a happy community. The same man, left in South Africa, would be sinking instead of rising to be of use to his kind.[1] Cramp a man's intelligence and you get at something the Great Onlooker never intended, and

[1] Mr. Horn is thinking of the half-caste in South Africa, where political and other influences hamper his free development.

the world's out of joint. You may as well cage a gorilla and expect it not to get vicious.

'African trade'd die without the half-caste. He's got something to uphold as well as his colour, and that's his brain. And he's got something to copy that's not voodoo. The pure savage is a voodoo advocate. A proper enthusiast for something that's not there. A ghost or anything superstitious, and you've got the man.

'Well, Ma'am, we're forgetting the book. You'll find I've brought in a naval officer. Nothing like the navy for topical. Grottos're all right for sweethearts and so on, but men'll ask for something more to their liking. Lads, too,'ll raise a natural cheer at the sight of a naval officer. The navy'll rouse pure emotions in half the time an army feller can do it. The sea – that's what!

'I'm getting Belle and Aderley along to Zanzibar, but I doubt if I can get 'em on board for the shooting eqisode. It'll all come clear after a night's sleep, but at the moment there's a slight haze.

'I'll be going early to-day, if you'll excuse me being somewhat hasty. I've got a meat ticket I said I'd share with that new feller's looking for work. He'll be wanting his dinner.'

Chapter xi

Jack stanley liked this. Buttler now made us drink to his luck, and tuned his guitar, and sang the good old song Is agwain back to Dixies, we all joined the chorus. I had been so buisy I had not read Bucks letter as yet. I had guessed pretty well what it contained. I went to my cabin and read the following. My Dr Son Come home at once, Cherokee Bill died with his boots on at Fort Smith Arkansass, and confessed before he went west to shooting the Deputy Sheriff at Tamehau. That clears you, I am getting Old, Your Mother is sighing to see you, all Pawnee is anxiously waiting for you, Remember I am old and you are their next Chief. I folded the letter with a sigh but returned to the merry making. The next song was One more river to cross, and after this the music became more centimental. We forced old Baba into European togs, got him drunk and shaved him. And on coming to himself after a good sleep he looked quite a youth. The old man grinned at finding himself looking so young. The feeling of being accompanied by a cockney Arab with a good wife and family in the old curiosity shop in Lambeth was nauseating to us.

We passed one large sailing ship bound for the Cape

and several smaller trading vessels and as the wind freshened we tacked into Zanzibar early in the morning after two days sailing having made steamship speed all the way. After casting anchor we were visited by Walkers agent. I had left business all in the hands of the mate and having dressed Buck and I went to the consulate. On entering the ante room we found several ships captains and other business men already there. But having been announced, I was immediately ushered in. I shook hands with the consul and also with Captain Sykes who I had previously met at Majunga. He motioned me into another room produced a bottle of fizz and a box of smokes, we drank and lit our cigars. I noticed he was eying me closely. He opened the ball by saying Who have you with you, Capt. I told him exactly. And Carroll? He is also on board the *Omoru* Sir. Good, Sir he said. Now we have our plans already made for the capture of the Wrecker Parker Pasha he is here. In the first place we want Carroll here, where we wish to interview him and of course having turned king's evidence and being pardoned for deserting the RN and furthermore as we mean to send him home to his wife and children a free man in every sense the least we expect of him is to tell us what he knows, but, what kind of an individual is he, Capt, I believe you had him with you in the Chesterfields. I told him how I had pictured Carrol and during my delineations of his character he was forced to smile and on my concluding

my character sketch he laughed out right, and said Jolly good, by Jove, I can follow. We will drink on that. And still smiling as he drank, he leaned over the table ; the way I have your reading of him, he is not a man of superior inteligence, but under the influence of good liquor, will cough up all his mind contains, and is thoroughly trustworthy, once he has become free from any thought of punishment and wants to get his own back on Parker who has had him in his clutches, and Parker is really responsible for the crimes Carroll has committed. How's that Capt. You have him exactly as I have Sir, I replied.

Now our plan of campaign, he continued, is as follows, You will sail before the Rammadan is over, as Parker will not sail before that time, you will pay the consulate a visit before leaving. Your time for sailing of course would better suit our purpose if you could leave Zanzibar two days before the conclusion of the festival. As that would give you time to locate the wrecked *Princess of India*, but as Carroll you state knows its position pretty well this should not be difficult. I shall meet you on the high seas about 150 miles north from here but will give you written instructions on your final visit here. Carroll must come here as soon as possible.

Now, Captain Smith if you have anything you wish to be done to further our plans I would like you to mention it, the Consulate as you know is a Britishers

Confessional. I would like you I said to take old Baba Carroll off as soon as possible, we got him drunk gave him a clean shave and donned him in a European suit, no one will know him Sir, he scarcely knew himself when he looked into the mirror, and was forced to grin. And my sailors I want to keep on board for fear of their acquainting anyone of our doings at the Chesterfields, as Parker might not like to attack us if he knew the story. By Jove that is essential he said. Please remain here a little while Capt I must see to that at once.

He was only away a few minutes when he returned, and was followed in by an Elderly gentleman, well groomed tall and with one of the most pleasing faces I had ever seen. He looked every inch a sailor and to me he looked to be fifty years of age. I was introduced to him, he smiled continually, took a cigar and commenced smoking. After a few more questions were put to me by Capt Sykes R N which I answered but which had no real significance as to his plans etc I rose prepared to depart when Commander How of H.M.S. Decoy said by the by Capt Smith a gentleman from Yorkshire I presume. Excuse me I come from next door Lancashire. He laughed. The same people he said only cousins he laughed again. I hope we shall have the pleasure of meeting you again he said still smiling. Sailors you know are always I find more likely to become acquainted aboard than they are on shore. We all laughed took another drink and shook heartily.

I left the Consulate and met Baba Cara who saluted me on passing he still looked a little under the wheather but was alone and making straight for the consulate. I could see several strangers on board the *Omoru*, Attracted there no doubt by the pretty looking shells. The Austrian buyer and the mate were very buisy weighing them. They were afterwards put on shore in shallow lighters as the shells were heavy. They were all taken off the schooner in two days time and I received my chaeque and was more than surprised to find I had 48 tons of shell. I deposited the cheque banking it through the consul.

Jack Stanley now made up our books and I felt more than gratified at the big profits. I made out a cheque to Jack Stanley for half the amount. But he made a flat refusal and told me that £200 was more than anyone else would have offered him and he would be satisfied with that amount as he declared I had sold for double the amount I would have received in the Persian Gulf for the shell found there. I was lucky of course I said, but finally pressed on him £500 which he thought was collossal. He drew £100 for expenses in Zanzibar and banked the balance and leaving a good watch on deck we lighted out to see the sights.

Of course Jack knew the ropes better than I did and of course we started for Aderleys gambling Hall which was situated on the outskirts of the city. It was furnished sumptuously, three large rooms and a Bar.

Beautiful lounges were spread around with beautiful pictures and tapistry. Aderley who was sitting in the last room was buisily playing poker. The place was filled with a cosmopolitan lot of men of the better class including Mahomedan Indians Greeks Italians a few Frenchmen, Ship Captains and their mates and a few sailors mostly British. Aderley recognised us smiled and nodded, but seeing he was buisy we passed on. The roulet table and various wheels of fortune now demanded our attention. Miss Belle although extremely buisy shook hands with us, and was she said tickled to see us. We made a few bets and won, and as we were flush we played high. We were paid in gold and after winning quite a large stake we quit after shaking good night with Belle.

At this juncture Jack ran against an old ship mate he had not seen for years. The two shook heartily and having been introduced we had shampaign and smoaks, Guinesses Stout, and other inhebriating imported stuff. We sauntered back to Belles and she shook again, smiling. And she handed me a small note as she handed me her winnings at rouge and noir unnoticed by any one. I played on and won again so that I felt quite wheighty. I excused myself to my two friends went to the bar and red the little note. Dr Capt All is not well with me, I have decided to leave Zanzibar and go with you, let me know if I am welcome, I would have told you through my cousin but he left here about half an

hour before you came in, he said he was going to have a sleep on the schooner as he was full up. As we close at 9:30 p.m. during the Rammadan I shall send my belongings as soon as I quit as Aderley says he has important business with the Consul at 9 pm. I shall be on board the *Omoru* after I have seen Aderley which will be late probably 12 pm or 1 am. P.S. Kindly destroy this letter and not a word to any one Ever yours Belle Seymore.

I departed soon after telling Belle in my best Mexican I had understood, she gave me a look, which thanked me and knodded her goodnight and as Jack and his old friend were going to wait till closing time I left and hurried to the *Omoru*. I found Buck sleeping soundly with his clothes on him. The first consignment of Belles goods arrived soon after I boarded my schooner, I had them safely stowed away in her cabin. These were followed by a second edition and these were also put away. I turned in and slept being awakened by Miss Seymore. All correct I said smiling but I noticed she was pail and looked excited. I got up later on and passing Belles cabin I could see her on her knees praying as the curtain was not quite closed. Something up I said to myself as I stroled round the schooner. I could not help peering into Belles room when I had made my rounds and found all correct. She was still on her knees. I turned in again. It was one oclock, Buck was still snoosing.

I woke up just as day dawned, the cook was buisy, the watch had turned the lamps out. Just then Jack who looked quite allright after his Night Off with his friend came on board and laying his hand on my shoulder said in a half tone, Aderley and the dancing girl called the Georgian beauty were shot last night out on the corral beach, Aderley is dead and the Georgian Beauty is fatally hit and cannot recover. She is in the hospital and will the report says be dead before morning. This shooting took place about 1 a.m. so people say who heard the firing, but up to now no one can tell anything about who did it. Right Jack I said I am sorry but of course I cant help it. Belle Seymour is on board and so is Buck they both came on board early. Belle brought all her goods with her, and is now fast asleep in her cabin. The Capt of the R N who I saw yesterday will be waiting for me at the Consular office I am going there now ten to one he wants us to sail at once. I will be ready on your return he said Good luck Cap.

I left hurriedly found Capt Sykes waiting for me. I took a drink of whiskey with him, Capt Sykes opened the ball. The Georgian girl and a gambler named Aderley an American were shot near the shell walk at 1 a.m. last night, the shooter left no clue. The woman cannot recover but she made this statement to the hospital authorities, I was wrecked on the coast on a steamer but I do not know her name I was bound for

Zanzibar. I am a governess. The boat I was in was picked up by Paka Pasha who was very kind to me and told me he needed a tutor for his four children. He suplied the other passengers five men with provisions and they sailed away. That is all I know. And most probably, as nothing has ever been heard of these passengers they were followed up and murdered, said Capt Sykes.

I told him I was ready to sail at any moment. Good he replied here are your instructions we will pick you up 150 miles away from here, sail please as near as you can to this course till we shall meet you, it will be still daylight then. We will put Baba Carroll on board he declares he knows the exact position of the wreck, and I must say he is not a bad hearted man, has told us all he knows and I found your reading of his character correct in every way. I shook hands with him, he said I will send you a few refreshments and excellent smokes immediately. I told him I would sail at once as I was anxious not to miss the offered reward, he nodded and smiling I left the consulate at once and found all ready.

Conversation

'I'm well away now, Ma'am, from the quiet Chesterfields. Getting into Zanzibar'll not provide the same background. Too much showy tourist stuff in a place like that, although I'm trying to avoid commonhood as much as possible. Nothing like beauty for literary

purposes. And that I've provided for you in the Chesterfields.

'I'm as sorry as you are, Ma'am, to get away from the quiet Chesterfields. Madagascar, too. A beautiful island for literary purposes. And that's *something* the French'll never stop me doing! So-called dog-in-the-manger, a Frenchman'll never let you touch the gold he's too frivolous to get out for himself. *Plus* that, if you have any influence with the natives more than he can conjure up for himself by his ridiculous habits, he'll deprive you of that too if he gets the chance . . . Said I was providing 'em with arms prior to a rising . . .

'Nice woman, the Queen. Tall. Good Roman features. General Gallieni sentenced her to exile for life in Algiers. A woman of a dark race, wedded to her old home – that's inhumanity! The dark folk don't stand exile. Something breaks inside 'em. Aye, their mechanism is different from the white races that are so fond of boasting about home sweet home while pursuing every known ocean and highway of the globe for their advantage, private or military. The Malagassies, same as the African, don't know the word, as such, but they're as dependent on a home as a child. A familiar spot's food and friendship to the dark-skinned races. Oh, aye, habit spells happiness to such simple souls. Break that up into exile and you break a heart with the same blow.

'She was surrounded by all kinds, but kept her

dignity. Englishmen, Turks, etcetra, she still remained a Queen.

'The old legend said that if she moved out of her palace into another there'd be misfortune. That's why she always stuck to it until they drove her into exile.

'A fine old fortress. Some wonderful architecture there – ancient novelties of all sorts. Secret doors and so on. Most gifted architects, the old Malays of Madagascar *plus* being gifted with seamanship.

'Aye, they die without literature, those dark kings of the southern sea! And the totems tell no tales except what you can learn from the Malagassies until the gifted genius arises that can read the signs on 'em. They gave Carl Peters the disease of melancholy. The relation between the human idea and the stone – he pined over his inability to bridge that chasm. Princess Betselao, now, she'd tell you the whole history of the totem stones, easy as singing.

'Aye, Carl Peters. Chagrin, that's what. A proud feller, couldn't stand to be proved ignorant on any subject.

'A legendary people like that should never be punished with exile. Better push 'em over the thousand foot precipice they keep for the purposes of execution. The Malagassies have kept that place sacred to punishment for hundreds of years.

'Aye, punishment goes swift and easy there. When the Queen sends out a messenger with the little golden

spear that's shaped like a heart on the head of it and has three spheres on it, and they don't come . . . Pretend they haven't seen him and so on, they're running grave risks of a precipitous end. A fine woman but she'd stand no nonsense. Every inch a queen, as she'd demonstrate once a year when she bathed in the lake of the sacred crocodiles. And then they exile a woman like that to a French colony!

'That sacred lake . . . That Prince Boris when he was there . . . Boasting that they'd never touch him, either. Goes out in his little canoe amongst 'em, but none the less he had to be rescued to save his life. One o' those foolish foreigners always anxious to provide sensation. Oh, aye, Madagascar . . . When you pay a visit there you could ask for Madame C– or the Princess Betselao and mention my name. It'll be a passport to friendship. Or the Archbishop . . .

'The Malagassies're friendly to outlaws. Any well-behaved outlaw can find sanctuary in the cathedral there. If you just kneel down and make the Sign it's as good as blood-brother to a Pangue.

'Aye, Madagascar . . . An ancient learned people . . . There's a town called Fellana. Means, the Town of Great Learning. Look what that tells you of the past. Then there's Antananarivo, the Place of a Thousand Stones. Why, they've got ancient irrigation on the tops of the mountains. Building feats the Egyptians'd have fancied. Ancient tribes too. Look at the

Antarivas – they were there before the Hovas came from the Archipelago. *They*'ve never submitted to slavery, same as the Sakalavas. They're fellers six feet high and fierce as eagles. A wild race. But mind you, nice people to talk to. Land rovers, same as the English. Friendly to outlaws . . .

'There's always sanctuary in the cathedral there. I've never felt uneasy in a church, same as that Presbyterian feller I lived with on the West Coast. Never laffed on a Sunday without a prayer for forgiveness. I'm strict R. C. but that's no reason why we shouldn't come out from Mass smiling. A child could play with its picture books in any of our churches without being qualified for hell fire.

'Aye, the priests understand that. That old Archbishop . . .

'*Procès verbal* was it? Ha! They were giving me that at the time, I remember. 'Twas when I had that good Chinese pony. One o' the finest horses in the world for speed and hardness.

'Wanted to forbid me grazing my horse somewhere where he'd a natural right to feed. Proclaiming the majesty of their law with their puny pinpricks.

'Ha! *Procès verbal!* . . . When I got it I rode down into the market and let my horse feed off the vegetable stalls for scorn. When he'd finished munching the bloom off the vegetables I rode him in and out of the stalls for a bit of a joke. Kicked up all over the place,

that pony did. His heels were as good as a weapon in me hand. When I'd had me fun I threw down a few *piastres* for payment and galloped off.

'*Procès verbal* they call it. Too much verbal amongst 'em. And that's what's wrong, first and last, with the Latin.

'They never dared to come near me in the market. Knowing the natives were my friends . . .

'Aye, and there was a bit of unsubmitted country I'd been gold-washing in. Used to cross the river to get there, so they gave me a *procès verbal* about that too. I mustn't cross the river, they said. "*Oui*, monsieur" I said to him, "you have the opportunity of stopping me if you want to. I'm going to cross that river now, so you've come at the right moment." Feller'd got two soldiers with him, but he said nothing. I crossed over and went about me business.

'Decision, that's what they lack. When talk fails they don't know what move to make next.

'Come to that, what was all this *procès verbal* but an easy way to get rid of me without mentioning me real crime? There's some nations can't wear the spur without prodding and that's the French occupation of Madagascar from first to last.

'How could they expect me not to be on friendly terms with the natives? Wouldn't any man who is'nt *homo stultus* find it his duty plus a bit of natural pleasure to assist a fine dark-skinned people to manly indepen-

dence? With Latin incompetence dragging 'em down to the level of the boulevard, so-called . . . Meaning the causeway, if the truth were known.

'It's too much causeway that's the ruination of the dark races. A lovely island like Madagascar – ruined with laws made in towns. Beautiful wildness everywhere, suited to a happy people . . .

'The Jesuits know best how to manage 'em. Been there a donkey's years. Those old priests . . . They feel nothing but scorn for the military. Discipline's no good with a gentle-hearted people. A bit o' common friendliness *plus* religion'll go further with 'em than all these gendarmes. *Procès verbal!* Laffable . . .

'Oh, aye, the priests know where the minerals are. Fine geologists, some of 'em. Highly educated naturalists.

'It's lack of natural education makes the military so stupid. All right for parade ground. Uniforms and so on. But come to a bit of warfare and they've got to call in the educated. Fellers that know the secrets of Nature.

'Aye, the Jesuits . . . old *Pere* X – riding everywhere on his little pony. A very learned geologist. Knew the whereabouts of all the minerals . . .

'Nice feller to ride with. He'd show you all the beauties of Nature *plus* the way the gold runs. And me being strictly Catholic and a prospector, he was naturally interested. Sitting there on his pony and taking

snuff like a thorough gentleman. Great broad hat he wore for the sun . . . Never faster than an amble . . .

'Not a flower nor a bird he'd not tell you the name of. All the natural instincts of a gentleman. Used to tell me where the gold was – information the priests have had for years. They've studied that island for more than a century. Libraries full of learned information they could give the military if necessary. But they know what's best. Keep your military ignorant and they'll be harmless. An educated soldier is apt to be one of the seven dangers of the world. Same as the savage, his knowledge must be limited for the world's good.

'Aye, 'tis the Virgin and Child keeps the world from disaster. Pleases the savage and detracts his attention from the Tree of Knowledge.

'Haven't the priests always known that disaster's liable to come with knowledge? Look at Lancashire – destroying itself with factories. I've never seen such a dreadful thing . . . The menace of machinery lies over the world at large.

'All this Socialism . . . Nothing in the world but indigestion after some ignorant feller's been getting at the Tree of Knowledge.

'Oh, aye . . . The priests know best . . . Excuse me suggesting it, but it'll pay you to be R. C. when you're in Madagascar. Paves the way to knowledge of all sorts. Get friendly with a gentleman like *Pere* X – and you'll need no guidebook.

'He knew how the gold grew . . . There was a lot more used to reach the coast before the Queen was exiled.

'Meself being a prospector, he naturally showed me the best places to begin washing . . . I used to wash for the Queen at one time . . .

'Well, Ma'am – we mustn't forget our duties to literature. Talking about the past is somewhat apt to obliterate the present.

'I'd best leave this with you, Ma'am. I must get home before this storm breaks. I think you'll find it all O.K. The plot's taken control now – all I need to do is to put me pencil to paper.

'But you'll see I had to change me mind about getting Aderley and that Georgian beauty on board. I should 'a had to use a grappling-iron to get 'em on board. Never use force, George Bussy used to say, either in life or literature. Follow the advice of a London critic like that and you'll not go far wrong. The friend of Dickens . . .

'Aye, that poor girl's feeling it deeply now. An affair of honour. Had to be committed as she was of Indian blood. But being a woman, she naturally feels it. A delicate situation for the captain of a ship, although he had full right to render asylum. But silence is wisest, taken all in all. And we can get in something later about Time the healer.

'I've brought in another naval officer. Always a

draw. Next to topical or love-light a naval officers's the biggest attraction possible.

'I've made him Yorkshire to get me contrast. There's some good fellers lived there, once you get to know them. Same as that feller cooked me breakfast for me I told you about. He was Yorkshire. I was under the weather, but he had a slice of bacon frizzling on that stove you gave me and it sure acted as a tonic. Aye, it's one thing to go out and seize your breakfast and another to have it cooked under your roof. It's the intimate cosiness a feller misses. These so-called cafés . . .

'I've never seen such an unhomely place as the Golden City. Why, in London you can feel a welcome in any eating-house, even if you've never been in it before. Plus the welcome you miss, what do these foreigners know about bacon or a cup of good English tea? I'm tired o' fellers got a holy enthusiasm for fried fish. Garlic, and macaroni . . .

'Those hot pies you can get near the Elephant and Castle . . . Near that railway bridge. Nice fresh meat in 'em . . .

'Well, Ma'am, here's to *au revoir*. Excuse me giving way to visions. You're sure doing your best.'

Chapter XII

Several boys who had made a quick trip now came on board with six cases of Shampaign and a dozen boxes of good cigars. We left at once catching the early morning breeze and were soon hitting the high spots bound for Cape Guarde Feu. I handed the course and instructions to Jack who read them carefully and smiled all over. Buck and his cousin were still sleeping. We opened a box of Fizz and Jack and I drank heartily to the Good Old Navy. We next sampled the cigars and found them excellent.

I now had a long talk with Stanley councilling him to say nothing about the shooting of Aderley, in fact we agreed that Mumm was the word and we surely kept it. Of course the Poor Mate never thought of Cherokee Belle in the affair so all went well. Buck was now awake and I took him a drink of Fizz, he thanked me for he said he had a terrible head on him. I left the bottle and glass with him and brought him a handful of our new smokes and he lit one and pronounced it a beaut, I told him we were sailing for Cape Guarde de feu Good Capt, and then he said for home sweet home. Yes I replied and Belle is on board with us duds and all. What he said, why yes she came on board about an

hour after you did. He said nothing. I told him she was still sleeping soundly.

I gave Jack a hand for a while we had another wet and a smoke I asked Stanley straight out what do you think of our chances of salving the *Empress of India*. Rosey, Cap. he said a five to one chance, in the first place I know pretty well she could not have gone down so quickly without having great rents in her plates somewhere. The question is when one comes to think it over these Barrier reefs shelve, providing she sank anywhere near where she struck there is every chance of our salving quite a useful lot of cargo. Yes but Jack I said I am talking about the bullion, the solid Muldoon (Irish slang). That, Cap. you know is a horse of another colour, but if she lay's in the position Focksul up, her cabins and strong rooms should not be hard to get at. I recon the Arab divers found her all right and salved a little Junk from Forrad, but the crew would not cough up much and besides I recon more than a dozen or so were murdered swimming ashore. I scratched my head Its better than horse racing Jack, besides that think of it £10,000 for the proof and capture. The proofs nothing he said I know the navy, its the capture dont you see. You of course I think will get more for the find, your only chance is to decoy him out, I would keep the guns well covered, If we can get him out he wont be alone. I know that slim old Arab he will have another Dow or perhaps two. Its worth fighting for Jack. If he will

come out leave the dodging to me, I'll get him if he's on board, I feel determined to have his hide.

We drank again I could see that Jack was sleepy. Have a snoose I said and I will keep the course. He handed the chart of the course to me and turned in. I went to have a look at Buck he had gone fast asleep again. I lounged near the wheel and was feeling dozey myself. I took a look at the course, I had an excellent chart I could triangulate a distant head land here and there, we were well on the measured course.

I was now joined by Belle Seymore, she came and drew a deck chair. I suppose you have heard all about it. I told her frankly what the consul had said. And she continued do the other boys know. Not a soul and never will if you keep up to the old tradition of a Cherokee (Cough up nothing). That part is a cert, Capt she said but you know I was educated by the Padres in the Puebloes. It is the sin that counts. I said say no more Belle, things will blow over. I know you too well they must have given you great cause for anger before you would harm them. Belle look here I said if I was tricked into leaving a good home and was a woman like you well I should not fool around losing much time. Remember a man is a man when he is not what is he?

She got up from her chair a changed bit of humanity, looked at the chart and took the wheel and gazed at the binacle. We laughed and joked about Buck and

Jack, but she declared she wondered what they would think when they found her on board once more. They wont be able to think for a while I laughingly answered. I know how they feel, I have been there myself many a time. When you feel you've been given another chance its Nature's way to drink to the occasion. This is the day that takes a little getting over, if you only mix the drinks properly when you are on the job. Jack is not so bad but Buck has been on it ever since he got his fathers letter in Majunga, a letter from his father saying all was squared up. Cherokee Bill has confessed to the killing of the Deputty at Tamahaa when he went west at Fort Smith. And now Capt. said she he is going home? Yes and I am going with him I declared as soon as I have finished this little business I am on now. And I am going too she replied in rather a loud voice brightening up, I will give up this country and gambling also, Captain, I have spun my last wheel. Your a good sort Cap she said, and you will be at home with us in good Old Oklahoma. I have two oil leases and three thousand pounds in Standard bank notes in that trunk you stowed away. Curious Belle you would risk so much in a tin trunk. Well, Cap. I was in an awful state of mind at the time, I was so wild, she went on, to leave that fool of a man I left all for in my happy home for he was the worst case at the finish I ever dreamed of You dont know him Buck does, But I was proof against him thanks to the Padres in the Pueblos. It takes an

Indian a long time to be persuaded but what I say is right. Buck was beginning to know him. But my cousin has been in one lot of trouble, I did not want him to get into it again, God forbid, I am sorry for it now, but it was up to them not to insult an Indian girl.

I changed the subject. How are we steering now Nor East by East she replied. Good, I said looking at the Patent log and then at the time. We shall make it OK before sundown if the breeze keeps up, we have twelve hours of sunshine. The Cook brought up a lunch which I greatly enjoyed, fresh oysters. After this I felt dozey and telling Belle to rouse me I fell asleep. I had a peculiar dream I could see Belle stalking her quarry from one corral dune to another, the gun now spoke twice the two lovers fell forward and as I awoke by a touch on the shoulder Capt Obolong shouted 'Ship ahoi.' Where away? to the north east a steamer I can see her smoke only.

I mounted to the crows nest with the glasses and saw the smoke away north east of us I guessed it to be the gunboat, we were on our course as laid by Capt Sykes he could not miss us. The Mate now came on deck rubbing his head, all right for once, I told him of the steamer nearly in sight we looked at the course and log again, we should be in sight of her by sundown she couldnt miss us anyway. Belle and Jack shook. You see I could not keep away from the schooner Jack. How did you leave your friend, I noticed you were

both lucky. Yes Jack replied I have not counted how much but it must have been quite a lot I felt its weight and all gold, I went to my mates room I think he said he had won £110 but as I was playing big money I won far more. Well it was fair throwing last night for I had made up my mind to give the sailors a treat. They wont forget me. They surely will not, they went away some of them with more gold than they would have saved in a life time. I left the mate and went below Buck was still stretched but awake he felt wicked he said but I got him round with a dozen fresh oysters and a cooled bottle of Guinesses. I feel better all ready he said laughing. Try another bottle you must be thirsty. I did so, after this he got up took a shower and felt he said ready for anything. Miss Seymore and Jack were buisily engaged looking at the chart when her cousin came up, he was looking OK and enquired jokingly where are we now Belle, he said, off Frisco, I suppose. She eyed Buck and replied, Oh Yes but this map shows we still have one more river to cross, Buck sent Obolong for his guitar tuned it and gave us the song we all joined in.

The Ships lights now showed up finely, the gunboat was well in sight. The mate took the glasses watched the Launch being lowered and in a few more minutes she came alongside put Baba Kara on board and I was asked to return with her by the midshipman in command. I quickly stepped on board and was soon

ushered into Commander Hows Sanctorum where I also met the jovial Capt Sykes.

The Commander made me feel quite at home by saying name it Capt at the same time pointing to a locker, I understood. I had a Scotch Whiskey, they had Guinesses stout. You hit us exactly continued the Commander, you have a fine schooner, she looks well and is a fine day saylor. She is I replied. And you got back old Man Carroll, he has rendered us invaluable service. He seems to have all his faculties well preserved. Yes I replied, and he has not forgotten his thirst. Oh no he said and has a partiality for stout. We now talked of the Yorkshire moors the home of the fox and foxhounds. Old Stag Hill and Long Ridge, the River Odder, I could see he like most Yorkshiremen had the sporting instinct highly developed. I thoroughly enjoyed his conversation, there was no reserve about him, we had supper together and I left before midnight he wished me a kind au revoir And I was soon back on the *Omoru*.

Conversation

'I see the doctor's in the garden this morning . . .

'Oh, aye, I've got me pages. Excuse me while I pay me respects to your better half, so-called.

'Morning, doc! A pleasant surprise to see you here . . . Excuse me, you're interrupting nothing. Plenty of time for our literary pow-wow. *Indaba*, as we have

it in this country. But we don't often have the pleasure of catching you at home in the morning.

'I suppose your good lady has told you that we're occupied with a world-beater this time. Life on the East Coast . . . Put in the easy style of fiction for comfort to the brain.

'Aye, I've written some interesting sketches of the Chesterfield Islands. Madagascar, and so on. Pen pictures is the fashionable name, meaning plain vignettes. An opportunity for a bit of pretty description etcetra. Beautiful spots I've seen . . .

'Of course I'm weaving in a few artificial[1] characters. Carries off the scenery easier. There are times, George Bussy used to say, when reality's got to be subdued.

'What I should like to have engineered into it is an essay on the slave trade. The weight of me fist in the face of all Mahomedans! Aye, an essay on the slave trade, if your wife'd help me with the suitable language.

'Doctor, I tell you, sir, it needs doing by someone that has humanity at heart. There's bloody doings on the East Coast that's never been let or hindered since the history of slavery began.

'Look at the London Mission. Look at Exeter Hall! Preaching the gospel to all and sundry innocent cannibals that never hurt a soul except in legal warfare. Oh, aye, *missions* . . . All right for prayer and so on. But when it comes to the susceptibilities, they're done.

[1] Fictitious.

'What I say, if you'll excuse me, Ma'am, is that a sore like that can be mentioned with propriety where there's a doctor on the premises. Bugle it out! Give 'em a blast'll shake the Mahomedan world!

'Doctor, there's suffering lads with none to put out a hand and save 'em. Where's England's manhood that can sit still and see an unnatural outrage perpetrated on helpless lads?

'Worth fifty pounds apiece for harem use. The head of the harem, *she* picks 'em out . . .

''Tis a delicate subject, but Christianity must tackle it or betray young lads. With so-called ladies exploring the slums with soap etcetra to make 'emselves conspicuous to the world, where's the indelicacy in denouncing the eunuch trade? Talk about white slave traffic – meaning organised trade in the demi-monde – 'tis a veritable Sunday school compared with the unnatural wickedness that grows out of the eunuch trade.

'Does God make man in His own image only to allow that image to be mutilated in their thousands? Made something less than man to please the jealous lust of Mahomedan slave buyers? Is a woman made more virtuous because she's watched night and day by some poor wretched soul caught when he was a wild slim lad in Abyssinia? . . . Full of joy in the achievement of manhood and shouting his songs to the sky . . .

'Doctor – those slave lads bartered on the shores of

the Red Sea and all along the Gulf're disgraced in the eyes of God and man for the purposes of travelling in safety with the women going over the desert to the harems of the East. Enough to transform every proper instinct of a young feller to gall and wickedness. A poison to the whole world, and there's no one'll speak of it!

'Aye, this false bashfulness is the curse of Christianity. Nothing crueller in the known world than these blushes of religious modesty. Oh, aye, cover up your face like an ostrich and pretend such things could never be, and you'll murder tender lads with every blush a Christian's proud to summon up!

'Aren't they the same lads as when they were little fellers lying in the sun near their mothers? And aren't they as worthy of gentle sentiments when they're growing up to man's estate? Aye, and they need it more! When a lad's little he's got his mother. But his mother'll not protect him from the legendary cruelties of the race that bred him.

'Fifty pounds to kill a man and perpetuate a monster . . .

'Slavery . . . "Oh, how cruel!" they say in the drawing-rooms of the *haut ton*. Harems! "Oh, how immoral!" But they'll not mention the root end of it which is condemning good healthy lads for the preservation of some idle women for the man that bought 'em.

'The beasts'd teach us a better way of life than that. Aye, they're nobler creatures!

'They'll not mention the subject in these so-called blue-books either. Oh, aye, a nice young English clurk's blushes must be spared at all costs. There he sits with his collar and his tie, and writes the word slavery, not seeing what it means. As for Parliament, they daren't mention such a word in front of the peeresses' gallery. Better let slavery go on than disturb the ladies in their beautiful crinolines and laces. Oh, aye, and you mustn't shock the distinguished strangers either or there'll be international troubles rising. Might be a Mahomedan listening there . . .

'Ma'am! – doctor! – I'm an old man and I've got a constitutional right to speak of such things. I've got the right o' knowledge! Aye, and the right of many a cruel spectacle not meant for the polite. Tears and pain of poor shamed lads . . . Not meant for the polite – no, nor yet for the feller that calls himself a Christian.

'Christian? What'd Christ do in the circumstances? *He'd lay about Him!* Did He ever cover up His eyes from wickedness and fall back on prayer? Not till He hung there suffering . . .

'Oh, aye, the churchman of to-day is apt to do anything for Christ save and except the unpleasant task of getting to the roots of any evil that's unmentionable in Piccadilly's drawing-rooms.

'I take off me hat to Christ every time. "You're the

lad" I say to Him "and by God you very nearly pulled it off that time!" Aye, and the world'll still pull it off if it follows up the trail He blazed.

'When Christianity murders the hypocrite for all bloody deeds done in secret and doesn't faint at the sight of a necessary act . . .

'Get rid of secrets and the world'll sing. It's these delicate subjects that are destroying the earth.

'Delicate subjects! Ha! There's one thing I uphold Napoleon for – he'd have nothing but stallions in the field. *He'd* not have a mutilated animal. Stallions! with their physical glory and their pride o' battle . . . What else, in the name of war?

'Napoleon . . . There was a man, faults and all, made more impression on the world with his naturalism than fifty secretmongers'd make. Oh, aye.

'There's secretmongers in Turkey too. Harems and slavery . . . But young Turkey is getting restless about it and no wonder. Can a young Turk imbibe an Oxford breeding and not blush when he returns and sees his own mother guarded by the semblance of a man to keep her pure? Mother! He looks in her face and cannot frame the word.

'Women need to be trusted. In Mahomedanism the fundamental principle of love is destroyed. When a man loves a woman he'll not only treat her well but trust her well Even a sailor'll do that. Rule by eunuchs'll destroy humanity. 'Tis a mother's love that saves the

race. But she can't do that unless she's a free item in life.

'Aye, 'tis the nations have trusted their women that've made progress on the globe's circumference. Look at England. Plus that look at the Americans. Anglo-Saxons, that's what! Come to that, look at Lancashire, that's sprung from the viking and his fine free women. Their god's a clean god. Out o' the water he came and he's not talking about houris in Paradise and committing all sorts of abominations in the name of religion when the real reason for it is the satisfaction of appetite and the spread of a nation.

'I met a young Turk in America once. Nice feller he was, studying the ways of Western civilization for the good of his country. It sure gave him something to think about to see the free action of American women. Plus that, he'd realise that in all lonely spots a gun's better than the most expensive eunuch for the preservation of family life.

'Come to that, doctor, the further east you go – Confucius and everything else – the further you'll be from a clean start.

'Ma'am, if you published these sayings in America your name'd be sky high. America'd sure call on England to help her to right these bloody wrongs.

'Why, the edicts of commonsense'll show that it's up to the Mahomedans now to explain their ways with humans. Doesn't Jesus Himself forbid slavery? "Feed

my sheep" and so on . . . What's become of His teaching? Where are the apostles of Jesus to-day? Nothing but *homo stultus* if slavery's still rife after two thousand years.

'Aye, if you twist a subject and fear to straighten out the kinks you'll never get to the bottom of it. Christianity is only such when it acts. Let it remain quiet about the slavery in the Persian Gulf and it'll betray Christ Himself. A lot of Christianity is far-fetched in high society. All these drawing-room meetings and so on. Half the cause of slavery is a Western religion that's not allowed to go forth and battle for the right, as used to be the custom of the crusaders. 'Tis a moral debt not paid. Why, certainly!

'Look at the simplest form of orthodoxy—'tis a danger to suffering humanity. You don't need to be a clergyman to fathom that. 'Tis the missionaries have kept Christianity alive. Why? Because they've got to do things're not orthodox. Things'd shock the drawing-rooms of the religious. They're the fellers've seen human nature naked and have learnt not to produce a blush at the spectacle. In forgetting the susceptibilities they've learnt to be men before they're priests.

'And what are these so-called newspaper fellers doing to help those poor lads of the East? They couldn't know less about slavery if they tried. They haven't the gift of finding out anything serious. 'Tis a secret

matter the East'll not lose hold of for any newspaper feller.

'Slaves're shipped from Guardafui and Massoah. A big port of entry there. And they'll be distributed from Muscat. Aye . . .

'Always a big trade in Georgians. Somewhat white women with great eyes like a dumb creature. From the Arabian Nights onwards there's been slavery there. The Sahara and the Arabian desert are full of it. If the religion increases as it's rumoured to be doing, tampering with the negro and so on, then the demand automatically increases.

''Twill be a bloody day for the world when the African races turn Mahomedan. There'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth amongst the poor lads of Abyssinia and elsewhere. A tribe should be left as Nature meant it to be. Look at the Kafir. There's virtue in his tribal ways. It'll be like killing an innocent child to take his legendary ways from him in exchange for the religion of Mahomet. Even the Christian missionaries, good fellers as they are, are not leaving him a better man. They'll turn an honest man, that could be left in the Earlies with fifty money bags and a fortune in ivories, into a chap'd rather steal a pumpkin than grow it.

'Moral and so on, I'm not denying. But selfish. And that's what no savage ever is. When the missionary has finished instructing him he's learnt to eat alone

instead of sharing his hunting to the last bone with those of his tribe. Christian vices – that's what he's been taught. But they're less harmful than Mahomedan vices, even if somewhat less spectacular.

'You can take it from me, doctor, if Mahomet were to get at lads like my Renchoro, 'twould be the end of civilization. It'd be the beginning of a crueller age than the world's yet seen.

'From Muscat they're distributed . . . Aye.

'Well, sir, I mustn't keep you over and above the time limit. You must excuse me being somewhat severe on Mahomet. But if it's the truth you're wanting . . .

'This eunuch trade, properly exposed'll be a big shock to the Faithful. Of course as far as my personal knowledge goes, I've been friendly with quite a few sons of the Prophet. Barring his religion the Bedouin's the best feller in the world.

'Quite a good few I used to know. They understood my kind. It's like a universal coinage to be a seeker after fortune. As long as they think you've an easy conscience you'll be hail fellow with all Arabs, Indians and so forth.

'Right-o, Ma'am, I'm not forgetting me chapters . . . You'll excuse me if I had to take advantage of the doctor's presence to do a bit of natural fisticuffs in the face of the Prophet could never have been exhibited to a lady alone.

'. . . Excuse me returning. You must excuse me saying Right-o. When I've been conversing a certain Time I find myself getting freer with my speech than is *comme il faut.*

Chapter XIII

I felt proud of my ship, she looked extremely beautiful she would show up the port and starboard lights and had the appearance of a tip toper which she really was, in the light of the moon. I found our little party still under the awning singing to Bucks never tiring guitar, I bade good buy to the Midshipman in charge of the fast launch, handed the next days instructions to Jack, joined the Jovial Party for a while and went below.

I was just beginning to doze when Buck turned up. What kind of a time did you have Cap he said. Splendid I answered never better. Yes what I have seen of British sailors they are a healthy fine lot, I could tell by the looks of the gun-boat she is on the fighting list she looks from what I saw a dangerous individual one that could raise Hell all round and fight in the middle. I think you have her Buck. Yes he replied that is my candid opinion of that lady, a bad thing to play with, and I know Paka Pasha if he knew there was anything like that paying him a call to thank him for his past kindnesses to humanity he wood want to get off the earth right now and as for old Baba he has just missed crusifixion for fair. Yes, I can see something happening shortly and the Sky will fall on somebody right

enough. I was tired and fell fast asleep leaving Buck still talking laughing and giggling to himself. The last I heard in the interior of his giggling was 'and they wont forget Jack Stanley.'

I had splendid dreams between times that night. I could see the staghounds of the village and the gentlemen in red and spurred and booted, help the ladies up on blooded horses, second to none, I heard the bugle sound and above all the omenous sounds of the stag hounds as they picked up a royal truant from Stag Hill and watched them topping everything in the shape of hedge and chase him clear into Yorkshire. Turning over my dreams would change and next I could see the black figure of Belle on her death hunt of revenge, and the same figure praying for the uncovered maiden of the Old Da Gama family in the cave of the pyramid. It was often thus with me after a late supper.

I slept soundly and woke at ten oclock. I took my watch and the mate went below. The rest of the day passed merrily listening to Buck or his cousins pleasanteries. Belle now showed signs of learning navigation. She had a book on the subject Jack had loaned her. Could already box the compass. The mates good nature and kindly disposition and charm of the sea I could discern was telling on Belle. Both Buck and I noticed it in fact Buck said It would be the best thing that could ever happen to her. Further more he said, That girl would make a good wife for any man. The

Cherokee girls all of them are good partners to a white man. Especially the half bloods. And if ever I do get spliced he continued it will be to my own people or a Cherokee.

I looked at Buck sized him up and told him it was the first time I had known him to be serious. As for myself I said if I make up my mind on anything I find some how or other I do the opposite, so I let the events come and think afterwards. Buck laughed and I am about the same he said. And what is the use of making plans for the future Buck? That we are going to put this boat on the sea trail for Frisco is a cert, after we get through this little job we are on, We will think of what comes next when we get there. He agreed to this and we both quit our dreaming for a while.

Ship Ahoy. Jack took the glasses. By the cut of her rig she is a Liverpool boat. Must be Cape bound. He soon had made her out, her house flag a white ball on a red ground read on referring to our Lloyds latest and taking the signals *The Two Sisters* Holt and Davis Water Street Liverpool Timber merchants Building Material etc. She was full rigged and carried every stick of canvas she could. She relieved the monottony Belle especially was delighted and held the glasses on her for quite a while. A little bit bigger than a prairie schooner Cousin said Buck. Yes, she replied, and I like the sailing ships better than the steamers, and I have always found the sailors from the sailing ships are

better men in every way than a steam boat crew. We all laughed and said of course they are. And now a tiny boat showed ahead, it was the tender to the Decoy but she was earlier than the time specified on the instructions given us by Capt Sykes. I got ready for the visit and was soon transferred to the gunboat.

I thought possibly there was some special reason for this early visit, but in this I was wrong. The good Commander commenced by inviting me to a drink and a smoke, after which the Hon William How still wearing his sweet smile said I have been thinking of what you told me Capt about Frea and your Grandfather, better known in East Lancashire and West Yorkshire as Old John Horn of Frea. His good wife was he thought a Sanderson. Exactly and in the village is The Horn Arms. I believe they are what we called the Fist and Spear. Exactly, Sir, I answered. And was there not a Mr X – who lived near Frea at the Bloody Lane Ends. Yes, sir and he was a great sportsman and was the owner of a famous pack of staghounds, which were specially bred and were said to be able to run a stag off the earth, in fact they were never known to quit. The good Yorkshireman was now quite excited. I hunted after the X – pack he declared, when quite a youth and met a young Miss Sanderson. We took the stag through the hills to the river Hodder, through Sherbourne and out on the Yorkshire moors, finishing below Stag Hill near the little country town of B – . The kill

took place there just at sundown. That sir was the longest hunt I ever heard of and the hounds were just what you said, untiring. Marvelous dogs Capt, marvelous dogs. Yes I chimed in and it took blooded horses to follow them. The conversation now turned on my Grandfather who he believed at that time was looked upon as a great authority on ship-building. Yes, but I can remember him although I was a young man loudly declaring to some elderley man who had dropped out of a hunt that The *Alabama* should have beaten the *Kearsage* when they fought off the coast of France and laid all the blame for the loss of the ship on ignorance on the part of the Capt. And his story which is still fresh in my memory was that when the *Alabamas* capt. found his cannon had no effect on the *Kearsage* as she was protected by chain armour he should have boarded her at once whilst his sails were intact and have taken her with the Cutlas and that his having gone down with the Southern flag still flying was nothing to his credit as it was a duel to a finish. But I said the old gentleman always declared that if he had boarded the *Kearsage* there would have been quite a different story to relate of this memorable sea duel. The Yorkshire gentleman grew laughingly quite excited. Quiet so quite so he said and although I have often heard of the incident that is the first time I ever heard this comment on the Affair, quite correct, quite correct. And we wandered together with the Otter hounds up the

beautiful river Hodder, over the fells amongst the pheasants grouse and small game, and just as day dawned we had dug out a badger.

I now expected the good man would give me probably a word of kindly advice on coming events. But he said never a word, only speaking of the good old hunting days. An odd character I thought. I shook adieu and left.

Conversation

'I'm aware that it's Thursday, but I thought I'd take time unawares. I've brought you an extra chapter this week. When a feller's gifted with rheumatism he'll have to arrange his exchequer accordingly.

'Talking of the moneybags as such, I see they're giving the old prospectors a dinner plus some kind of a bonus if you're a pioneer. I might have augmented me income that way if I'd come here in '87 instead of '88. That's the bit of red tape they've laid down for a trap about it. Catch a lot of us old timers, that will. I'm not a pioneer because I never fetched up at the Golden City until '88. Or was it '89 . . . I've never burdened me memory with dates. A brain's given you for thoughts, not dates. Leave dates to all little clurks that 've brought their tongues up to stamp-licking.

'Aye, the Golden City's forty years old so the millionaires're going to rattle the moneybags in the faces of the old prospectors. Fellers like me, that 've done

all the gold finding, have got to sit down in rows to a charity feast ought to make 'em sick with nausea. Come to nausea, there's no better word than the old English spew, if you like a bit of Anglo-Saxon.

'Look at old Tom B—. Good fellers like him've got to lick the boots of Sir Lazarus Crœsus that never smelt a gentleman in his life, let alone a streak of gold in the rocks. Excuse me sneering at the idea, but I'm not wanting to eat the bread of any millionaire's misdeeds. In public, too. Those fellers've got no shame to suggest such a thing.

'Oh, aye, tie your bibs on and act humble to the giver of the feast. Why, they're not even there! And that's the crowning insult that spells No Gentleman. Those old prospectors'll have to be content with the Mayor and Corporation watching 'em feed.

'I'll eat no prospectors' dinner in public here until they let me sit down with me two partners! I'll have a good pack donkey on the left and on me right there'll be a black lad like my Renchoro. Where would the Golden City be without the pack donkey and the Kafir that 've shed their bones and their blood something pitiful? Aye, there'll always be room in Abraham's bosom for those two whilst Sir Lazarus swells his stomach up on banana skins he's picked up in the gutters of hell . . .

'Where's the dignity of all this boasting? Forty years of greedy nothingness and then they've got to

prance and scream in the face of the world dressed like clowns of the demi-monde in a so-called pageant. But the world's not listening. The age of the Golden City is of moment to nobody but those concerned. Mine magnates and their lady wives in high Suburbia. Office fellers sitting behind their desks waiting to buy an idea cheap from old-timers . . .

'Old prospectors! Why, I'm a practical geologist if the truth were known! What's the Stock Exchange for earning a living with dignity, compared with a knowledge of geology? All that silly shouting at each other. A relic o' barbarism you'd not find in a Kafir kraal. Suits Israel, but there's quieter ways of making money for gentlemen.

'Well, Ma'm, I'll have to be arranging for marriage bells soon. Of course she'll have to marry Stanley now. If for no other reason the captain of a ship should be the captain right through. It'll be no attraction to see him dallying over courtship when the imagination pictures him on the bridge for emergency's sake.

'There's no doubt she'll have to be content with Stanley. The wheel in her hand and a sou'-wester when the captain marries 'em . . . And no reason, of course, why he shouldn't feel a little natural emotion when he sees that he's lost her. A tear's always topical, come to that. He could 'a had the girl, but duty pulls stronger.

'But I'm sorry for that girl I had to leave at Doulton's. Stanley'll have to write a straightforward letter to her.

'Curious that he doesn't know she was Baba Cara's daughter. For the sake of convenience he never went about wearing his own name.

'Aye, that girl passed an examination for oil-painting on pottery. The other daughter was at Redfern's, one of the finest dressmakers in England. Favoured by the nobility and so on. And the mother kept a curiosity shop.

'Naturally the girl at Doulton's was longing for Stanley to come back etcetra and so forth. But being a deserter, he couldn't move.

'Better not tell that poor girl that he's about to get a pardon for his services to the navy. It'll only cause trouble in the ultimate – two difficult to fit her in now. She'll just have to be a good girl in the house to her mother. Or if that doesn't suffice her, I could hint that when she's got over the worst one of the firm could be attracted by her sweet face. Always bending sadly over her painting and so on . . . One of the Doultons'd be good enough for any girl. Good, solid people . . .

'Well, I'm getting along to the sensational later. That'll provide me contrast to the quietude of the Chesterfields. What'd you say to finding eastern ladies of high rank, looking their best and fully be-jewelled, afloat in the cabins of the ill-fated *Empress of India?*

Aye, they'd be fully caparisoned in their beautiful clothes, nearing Zanzibar as they were . . . Golden slippers and silken trousers . . . Strings of coins and

pearls about their necks . . . Emerald rings weighting down the floating hands of the dead . . .

'Naturally they were pressed up against the cabin roof by the floating furniture . . .

'All those fabulous scents, attar of rose etcetra and so forth drowned in the smell o' death that can't get free to the cleansing of the sea . . .

'Sharks're very quick to notice tainted water. They must have been sailing their fins about the *Empress of India* for many a day, hoping for the best . . .

'High class Mahomedan ladies, meant for the Sultan's harem . . .

'You can help me with that part. Description and so on that's more suitable for a lady. You might draw a contrast between the golden-slippered princess on her silken cushions, surrounded by harem slaves, and the crabs that . . .

'What's that, Ma'am? . . . Why, certainly. I know Thursday's a busy day for you. I shall not detain you a minute. You can tell me on Monday what you think of this chapter.

'Well – *au revoir*!'

Chapter xiv

On board the steamer tender I found Capt Sykes and two of the gunboat crew. The Captain told me they were divers, Old Experienced men who would assist in finding the wreck and making sure of the name of the same. They were provided with all necessaries and as they were old sailors would make themselves comfortable anywhere. And as they had received a message from Zanzibar that Parker had sailed three days after the Schooner had left and was under surveylance I could proceed to the scene of the wreck as soon as I wished as I had ample time to locate the sunken steamer. And above all, if he attacks you which he no doubt will, draw him out as far to sea as possible, as I believe from what I have seen of the *Omoru* she is speedy and can walse away from a dow anywhere and in any kind of sea. But let him fire on you if possible that is what we want, you will have every assistance from us as soon as necessary. As I am well aware Capt you know the ethics of wooden ships in duels. I can leave you to it. But of course you understand the more of these dangerous characters we net the more lasting impression we shall make on the inhabitants of the worlds danger spot Cape Guard de fui.

I thanked him, he put his men and tackle on board and likewise several more cases of liquor and cigars. A personal token from the Commander. He then handed to me, a roll of charts of the coast, the last survey and also a complete drawing of the interior of the ill-fated *Empress of India*, and after wishing me the best wishes he left.

We now changed our course and after a few hours sail cam in sight of the barren coast. I was sleepy and excusing myself for being absent so long I handed the charts etc over to Jack. I was awakened by Belles cries of wonder, she had sighted a nomad Arab caravan on the move over the sandy waste away from the coast. They certainly looked picturesque as they moved in file over the bad lands towards the interior. But the Excited Girl could see far more than we could the colouring on the head gear of the leader and the way he moved his head from side to side, looking like a real pathfinder sure enough, she cried, and till sundown she amused herself announcing what she saw on the barren lands, date palms, herds of antelope, all were duly mentioned.

I took the night watch, and as the Jovial Jack tars made themselves quite at home, everything went along smiling. Jack relieved me before sunrise and as Old Baba knew the coast well and we had the latest naval charts and soundings we had no difficulty in finding the bunch of Cocoanuts and Date palms pointed out to

us by the old man. We had an early breakfast, the two Jack Tars joined us. We washed this down with cool guiness after which boats were lowered, and the first of a section of barrier reefs was soon located the first crossing the second (?) Our boats now tried for half a mile each way, this was at low tide. The avrage tide was 6 feet, So that the steamer could easily have crossed at high tide, but as we had learned from Baba that it was after midnight she had been wrecked we did our best over the second one. (?)

When Baba told me he could show me by going on shore the exact spot at which the decoy ship was set up, I decided to go. We took our rifles after safely searching the coast with our glasses for any moving objects but we saw nothing. We landed and Carroll took us directly to the spot. There was no mistake, he had told us the truth. There driven in the sand were three stout stakes, the dummy ships masts had been rigged to, and two of these had the bolts still in them. We returned immediately.

It was now about noon. To me it was like waiting for the Grand National to start. All had a hasty meal. I had offered £100 pounds for the first boat that picked up the wreck or any wreck. I had a new cattemeran on board and I had the outrigger placed in position, the sails were made in Majunga. She was said to have been built by a famous old Malagashe boat builder. I lowered her and we tried her out she was all but a bird

with her huge spread of light Malagashe brown linnen Sail, she could scutt along at a great speed. We watched the diving operations and dispersed the drinks to the divers who were still hard at it. I advised them to try on the morrow as we had lots of time but they continued. I felt sorry for them it was getting late and the sun was ready to set when the oldest Jack Tar of the two took off his helmet waving his hand aloft, its Mine Cap, its mine. He took a line and placed a small cork buoy over the spot, the weighted line was a sure indication. Down went the mate and coming up said there she is the mail steamer *Empress of India* sunk nearly prow up and lays on her side. Right Jack.

Everybody now cheered till I thought to myself its a good thing theres nobody within a good few miles of us they might have heard us. We all went ashore. I handed the winning Jactar £100 in gold and his mate fifty. My mate telling me Cap the navy dont allow any rewards, so mumms the word, we all shook over it and then formed a council of war Buck the two Tars and myself. We all agreed it would be best to hoist our boats and put to sea away out of sight of land till early morning. And this we did.

The evening was spent in diving stories and eventually the two divers turned in. Whilst Jack and I discussed the probabilities of salving the cabbin, all of course depends he said on the way she could be got at. We examined the drawing of the interior and eventu-

ally the mate pointed to the movable skylight we had a full description of her construction plans of the cabin the strong room etc. Of course the bullion she was supposed to carry for the Cape and other valuables would be in this. If the strong doors of the strong room were rusted it would take a long time to open them. The passengers valuables would also doubtless be in that room for safe keeping.

Eventually Jack turned in but early next morning we found the buoy and, breakfast being served and washed down with best Scotch, Jack got ready for diving. Oblong also being an expert got ready. The mate and the Tar who had been luckey enough to lokate the wreck agreed to go down and assist Jack, nothing about it ever to be mentioned. His companion agreed to this. We kept a strict look out from the crows nest but were not bothered till sundown with visitors.

First report from Jack was 'all easy picking.' The mate and Jack Tar had managed to unscrew the top of the cabin skylights and had a clear opening and a straight drop to the strong room the door of the strong room was not closed but was held open by the skeleton shinbones of a pair of legs. But a pile of rubbish had to be moved before they could open the door, the Bullion would be stacked at the far end of the strong room, the plan of the room showed this to be 9 feet from the door. Take plenty of rest lads I said to the sailors, your

getting £200 a day if I dont get a bean, Jack, my mate had put me on to this little act. It worked like a charm Bly me Capt two hundered pounds a day, Yes I said and make the day as long or short as you please You see you are an old pal of Jacks. He touched his forehead with his finger I am on Cap was all he said. Their helmets were adjusted and down they went one after the other.

I left them, Old Baba was attending the machines, all hands could be spared were assisting. I took a glanse at them once in a while Belle watched progress and I noticed she always assisted the mate in every way in which she could be useful. It was ten when Jack the diver came to report and brought up a peaked cap with a gold band the center of which bore the insignia *S.S. Empress of India*. This was the cap of the poor chap who had kept the door ajar with his skeleton shinbones. His pal then came along. He was a finely built man hairy chested and on his broad chest was a beautiful full rigged tattoed old Man O War and her name below H.M.S. *Pinafore*. He showed no signs of fatigue. Cap he said excuse me Sir but could you please pay me in notes instead of hard. Of course I said, and here he winked at the mate. You know why. The mate told me it, the Bullion or gold pieces would show whilst the notes would never be noticed. I called Belle and begged her to change me notes for gold. Why of course she replied. She went below but called me, Will

you have the notes in hundreds or fiftys. I thought fiftys would be best. She then smilingly handed me 20 five-pound notes Standard bank of South Africa. I showed the roll to the two tars and asked them if they would do. Do sir the best on earth sir we all know em. They then said they knew there would be no danger till night and as their instructions are always secret they had said nix. All right I answered, and thank you that will make £400 I owe you any time now if you wish. Oh no Sir thats all right. They went away with beaming countinances, and were soon rigged up and below.

They had taken four slings with them and it was not long before four black strongly iron bound cases came up one after the other. These the mate had stowed away in my cabin. He said they were marked gold specie and had the weight and other marks on the cases. They sent up four more of the same black cases before they took a well earned rest. I asked them about refreshments Oh no grub Cap they said a drop of scotch before we go down will do us. After a rest and a whiskey they dived once more and this time sent up 8 cases which were stowed away in my cabin immediately. They then came up and I thought they had finished. Finished for the day? oh no Sir we make a couple of dives yet Sir. They smoked a cigar apiece rolled around on deck for an hour or so and then proclaimed themselves quite fit. Wonderful men I thought. They called the mate to one side and had a

long chat with him. I saw them all smile. Jack Stanley told me they would report too much moss which they had cut away all but very little, but felt all right as to her being a mail steamer, that would give them another day so that when the Capt came aboard that evning it was a hundred to one they would be able to put in a full day for me on the morrow.

I laughed heartily. You cannot beat a Jack Tar for scheming said Jack especially a diver, you see he can say nothing and theres one thing certain, he cannot go overboard and look for himself thats where they have him. And it wont make any difference to the issue at the wind up. I smiled again. Surely clever Jack I answered.

They were soon diving again so that before 5 p.m. I had 28 cases of gold on board. I was a wealthy man, I felt my boat the *Omoru* was my lucky star. After they were up the elderley man with the tattoed breast sed Cap I will go down once more for a short spell, theres a bag of interesting bones and a skilington head of a lady with beautiful teeth stuffed with gold, the hand is raised at the front with precious stones I think her slippers is gold, so lend me a small sack and I will fetch her up but keep that gal away, if she sees it she might take a fright, you know wot gals is. I produced the sack he went down and on his return I took it to my cabin unnoticed by Belle and stowed it away. She was busily engaged talking to Jack. I came back immediately and

taking out the roll of notes I counted out 8 fifties and told them if they were not satisfied I would double it, they were in high glee at the way they had been treated they said and would dive all day next day. I told them it would be £500 if they did, they went off and dressed acting like men who had a sudden fortune left them.

Buck now returned with the cattamaran with sufficient fish to supply our wants for two good meals. The fish were fried and cleaned at once. Meanwhile I had reported all to Buck and he was absolutely surprised, showing his glee. He called the two tars below and we left the mate and Belle buisily engaged in conversation under the Awning aft.

We examined the sack I removed the tiara of diamonds with a large pigeon blood ruby and an emerald on each side, it was a beauty, there were also four string of black and white pearls, nicely graded and the gold work slippers. These last I intended to drop through the porthole. The diver then took the sack and contents and threw them overboard via the cooks galley so those on deck saw nothing unusual. Buck then opened a couple of bottles of Fiz we had next the port wrapped in a wet sack it was deliciously cool and refreshing. The mate had the boats in the davits and the cattamaran was cleaned and detached and stowed on board. The crew were now attended to and we tacked away slowly as it was now sundown. The tender had sighted us and after a while we were boarded by Capt Sykes.

I was sitting aft and as the two Tars saluted and reported I could hear the word moss, he seemed perfectly satisfied after this that we had found the lost steamship. He told me as much and said he would leave them for another day, and pick me up, but watch well for Parker he is only a days sail away and may attack you immediately he knows you have discovered the wreck, In fact I believe he purchased two Bell diving suits and a machine, and has on board two Arabs who understand diving. So we hear. But so much the better he cannot well escape us, only draw him out as he will be sure to attack you. Of course we have him under surveillance. I thanked him and he went off in high glee. The Tars saluted him on leaving and he passed out quickly into the night.

Conversation

'Better count the pages, excuse me. Although it went very easy I think you'll find I've done a double shift this week.

'That caretaker did his best for me on Sunday morning. Let me go into his room. Nice table and so on. Kept company out while I was busy with me wreck etcetra.

'Poor things, on a Sunday a house like our's is nothing less than a jackal's cage for restlessness. And what's caging 'em? With meself it's common decrepitude that forbids me walking out to the blue again. But

there's the young there'll not move to help themselves to a bit of fresh air on a Sunday. Busy themselves with nothingness.

'These poor whites . . . Surely the shavings of humanity. Never meant for anything but sweepings in the Great Onlooker's workshop. Aye, they go where the broom sweeps 'em! Lying about in all corners of Africa . . .

'There's two kinds in life – one that holds the broom and one that'll get swept before it. No notion of battling out . . .

'Fresh blood, that's what's missing. If you look the truth in the face, it would be better for a man to mate with a healthy native woman than some o' these pale sluts're too white to do any work. When you're Dutch you're too proud to battle out for your country with your muscles. Muscles're for natives only. Nothing but politics and offices for a living and a race'll sure obliterate itself. A diet of wind, both in Church and State, so-called.

'You can take it from me, Ma'am, that if this country's not going to be a coffee-coloured turn out it's time we got a breath of the North into it. A few shiploads o' clog and shawl or a big lot of fellers like Herr Schiff'd go far. Always faithful to a bit o' ground, the Germans, and when the land feels its master it'll grow. Those Danes and Swedes, too, 're built for battling. Look at 'em in the States. If it hadn't been for hard-

working fellers like them the whole country'd be eating fried fish by this time *plus* garlic for the dagoes. Jews and Latins, that's what. The old *Mayflower'd* never have stood a chance against 'em if it hadn't been buttressed up with the North. Nordic, so-called. Meaning plain viking.

'Aye, this country's sure crying for the North to save it.

'Well, just see how you like it, Ma'am. I'm sorry I wasn't able to elaborate the picture of the princess of the harem cuddling the ceiling in that cabin. 'Twould a' led to too much reality and other unpleasantness. No way to treat a poor dead woman to expose her bones to the public gaze. So I arranged to have her put in a bag for decency. Come to cinema, likely as not they'll spread her out for effect. The blazing jewels etcetra amongst the bones . . . But they'll not get me to do it.

'Thank you, Ma'am, I've got me pipe. I'll just be watching my Madeira view while you glance over it.

. . . . . .

'Well, how does it strike you for attractive? I've been chasing the money about for a change. Nothing so topical as money when mentioned in large sums. Me paying the Jack-tars in notes or gold'll be a fair draw at the cinema. What the poor like to see is the proper distribution of wealth. When a feller's not likely to strike Eldorado in this life, he's all eyes for romance. Helps 'em to live. Go to bed smiling and you'll wake up happier. Half the world lives on visions . . .

'Aye, look at the prospectors, let alone the poor. It's visions takes 'em over the mountains. Rather die than turn back, like that poor feller I found in Madagascar. Wandering about with diamonds and tin in his pockets and starving to death with his knowledge unused.

'The Queen didn't fancy too many white men in the country. The French had given her a natural distaste for the breed. No, she didn't care for 'em. Throw 'em down the castellated rocks and nothing said.

'She had a soft heart for R. Cs. though, that woman . . . Same as her cousins in the *pueblos*.

'Cousins? Of course they're cousins, excuse my sharpness. She was a Malay in origin and so's the Incas and the Indians of Mexico and South America. Didn't I tell you the catameran sped two ways with them? East and west . . .

'A soft heart for R. Cs., the Queen . . .

'Oh, aye, the old navigators sure had a right instinct when they tried to impress savages with a cross. Another man's totem is always a mystery that commands respect with any feller that has his natural feelings unspoilt by education.

'Madagascar . . . I told you about the ancient aqueducts on the top of the mountains. Some advanced race happy in the full pride of workmanship . . . And blackberries big as walnuts. *They* taste of Lancashire, if anything does! And no snakes there to keep you wary. You can walk with your eyes on the blue there

. . . Certainly they've *got* snakes. But if they strike they can't hurt you. Like Ireland for that. They've had some old Saint Patrick in that beautiful island, but 'twas a greater miracle to preserve an Eden there on the very fringe of Africa.

'Beautiful gold there. Beautiful yellow, and some of it of a fine greenish shade. Best in the world for colour, Malagash gold. Aye, and there's such lots of it.

'England could a' had it once, if the French hadn't nipped in. A lovely rich island like that . . . without thought we go and destroy the happiness of an innocent people meant by Nature for peace. Good agriculturists, too. An industrious, lively people, the Malagash, making the best of such gifts as Nature has prepared for them, just like a white man. And better! They're gifted with content, which is what the white man is somewhat lacking in.

'The Frenchman has always shown by his frivolous military functions that he's totally unadapted for pioneer work among a dark race. If he's a *fonctionnaire*, he's privileged to carry a *maîtresse* about with him. That means no children born on the island. And that's unhealthy *plus* bad policy. All simple natives respect a proper household with a wife and children in it. Always very critical of the demi-monde.

'Aye, children in a country of innocent natives are like arrows in the hand of a giant, as Moses said. Or it might have been David. Excuse me if I'm wrong, I'm

R. C. right through, but I never had me training in Scripture, same as Sinclair.

'A race that'll take an unrespectable woman prospecting can't hope for success in worldly affairs. If a Frenchman'd remember that a woman's sphere is the home he'd not be so rife with her in all walks of life where the sex is a nuisance. That's why I'm outlaw in Madagascar. They didn't like the opportunities my free state gave me of prospecting to advantage . . . All over the island on an old mule came from Menelik's country. Roaming in freedom from the fair sex . . .

'The Portuguese are much the same pattern as the French *re* the susceptibilities [i.e. morals]. And so busy at indolence they can't afford a shirt.

'Those officials at the post office at X – . Celluloid collar tied round with a bow like a baby's sash, artificial cuffs, and you're dressed. But for the eye only. No sincerity there, and no love of a bit of soap and flannel.

'Where there's no sincerity prosperity'll hold back. Aye, fortune'll do more for a man that had to fight for the shirt on his back.

'These Latins . . .

'Outlaw in Madagascar for no fault but that I was more mobile than most! *Le brigand fameux!* Aye, they all wanted to see the last of me when he marched me down to the ship . . .

'He was holding out a little Union Jack for the purpose of protecting me . . . Shaking his old sword as he

marched along, martial as you please, albeit somewhat nervous.

'I tell you, Ma'am, that old consul was a thorough gentleman, French though he was. Aye, there's always some lovable exceptions! Like that young officer I saw with de Brazza's canoes . . . A boy not much older than me and sent on a fine expedition for his country . . .

'Naturally they couldn't touch me, once aboard a British vessel. One o' the grandest rules of the sea is that your country's flag spells asylum.

'That old feller 'd had a word from England I'd better not be touched. A Lancashire man can pull big power if he belongs to a shipping family. 'Tis the old terror of a viking, not dead yet in Latins.

'Aye, *voila le brigand fameux!* . . . They all wanted to see the last of me. Two rows of 'em staring at the notable spectacle . . .

'*Voila le consul! Il n'est pas un Francais ne plus!*.'

'Shaking his old sword and very red in the face . . . One o' Nature's gentlemen that's beyond the edicts of race. Stood up to criticism like a man. Not a Frenchman any more, they said . . .

'Well, Ma'am, I must be thinking of what comes next, so I'll be saying *au revoir*.

'*Brigand fameux! Protégé de l'Angleterre! Voila!* . . .

'Laffable . . .'

Chapter xv

The fish supper was delicious. We all dined together and enjoyed music and bottled cool beer till late. I took the watch and Buck kept his deck chair. The night was cool and early before sunrise the cook brought coffee and all was astir. Breakfast over we were soon anchored near the buoy and if possible were more lucky than the day before we emptied the strong room before 3 pm and I recovered all kinds of valuables besides the bullion, some lovely presents and a fortune in jewellery. The cabin itself presented a gruesom sight as many of the passengers died in the cabin, of course as the Old Navy Jack put it, it all goes in with the diving business. Several badges of gold wire prettily designed were brought to light bearing the name of the ill fated steamer.

I paid them off immediately they had finished diving and I did not forget to recompense Old Baba immediately we were through. The two Navy Tars thanked me properly saying that was the best luck they had heard as befalling a diver of the Royal Navy. The boats were raised and the cattamaran again brought on board and we made ready for sail at any moment so as not to be caught knapping. As we all agreed especially Buck

that the man who wanted half the loot this time would fare worse than the feller who came after the shells, rifles were got ready and we were prepared for any immergency. We were about the happiest lot, crew included that I ever remember. Belle gave us a song to the music of Bucks guitar and the Jack Tars gave us the sailors hornpipe the Mate joining in. They were all good dancers. Buck toasted the British Navy an admiration which he said he would always keep for humanities sake, and if other nations only saw what they were doing there would be a good kind heartier feeling abroad for the lads in navy blue. We all drank his toast and our hearty thanks went to this whole souled American. The Old Navy diver toasted the American Navy, he had often met their merry boys and they had been birds of a feather at once. And ended by singing 'Shes a grand old flag' in which we all joined Belle included.

It was now sundown and we sailed east as instructed but showed no head light only the port and starboard the red and green. We rode around half reefed as the visiting tender was not yet noticed from the crows nest. Buck and I now rested also the two divers whilst Belle and Jack were near the wheel with Capt Hobalong spinning them a yarn about the wonderous island he lived on in the Pacific. Buck and the old Diver now had a talk of life as it is in the R. N. which the Tar said was all right providing of course we did not know what

that ment. For instance there aint no better man lives than our Commander and we call him fighting How, he has been on all the coasts and from Delegao Bay to the persian gulf he is in Supreme command, but is good to the men but they say hard on the officers, of course this makes the officers a little hard on the men, and of course there is always something of that in the navy.

I listened till I fell asleep and nobody waked me till about 4.30 a.m. The two Tars and Buck were also in the arms of Morphius. The Mate woke me Ship ahoy Captain he said, the big tender she is close but carries no lights. Of course the two divers arose immediately. The tender came alongside and interviewed the divers. They had a splendid light they said and had red plainly *Empress of India*. My mate had also seen it and I handed Capt Sykes two of the gold badges S.S. *Empress of India*. The mate also handed him four books which looked like ships account books but of course they were still wet so he had not tried to open them. This is exactly what we want he said and is proof positive of the sunken steamers identity. He then ordered the two divers aboard the Launch with their paraphranalia I noticed the Launch was roomey and had four long boats in tow full of armed marines. He laughed and said the Little *Omoru* has certainly been in lucks way. Your reward is now an assured fact Capt he said, for he said in an under-tone we have him.[1] His salving boat is

[1] Pasha Paka.

only small whilst he has a fine dow crowded with men from Cape Guard de fui fighters all. Our plan is for you to sail due north till you sight him, there are two Dows. You will please sail leasurely to your usual place near the lost *Empress of India*. That Pasha Paka will fire on you is certain and, as there are two dows, will attack you. Then sail away as fast as you wish we'll then have evidence complete he has fired on the British Flag on the high seas.

And after he has opened fire I understand I am at liberty to retaliate? Well Capt. you have done all we would wish but of course you can give him a gentle reminder, every owner is proud or should be of his charge. But the *Omoru* can take care of herself he smiled. It is all working out as intended he cannot escape as the reef extends for thirty miles. He has to fight and as the sun will soon be showing them, and they are on their way now the next two hours will prove all I have said.

He shook and departed. I immediately left, sailing due north. This news now put us all to business. Ships rifles were delt out and examined, the wheel was made proof from rifle fire, the crew were stationed where we thought they would be safe and do the most execution in case of need. The mate picked out all the soft shells as these did the most execution and we bowled along merrily. Jack rigged up the fore peaque for observation.

And now we had an early meal and a drink for luck. Buck and I had noticed Belle and the Mate were very attentive to each other and he whispered in my ear the best thing ever happened. I laughed he brought out his guitar and we all sang Old Shipomine and kept the music up till we saw the first glimpse of sunrise. The mast head shouted Ship ahoy. Jack Stanley quickly ran up to the cross trees and climed to the mast head. Sure enough, two dows and one long shaped boat, that of course is for the divers. Buck now laughed 'All waiting for half of our soft shell I suppose' We were all forced to giggle, remembering the pirate of the Chesterfields.

The schooner was quickly put about and I sailed over on the new commers like a bird as the sea had freshened. As I neared the largest dow making all the speed I could, I turned as quickly as possible and took a tack to south west throwing just enough high side to winward as saved us from a hail of rifle fire I commanded all to keep low and we answered the following dow with our winchesters. Old Baba had seen Parker firing from the Dow he wore a green band round his turban. I could see two green turbans. Belle in spite of my warning now stood up and fired I saw a green turban fall back from the Prow and after a few exchanges down went the other green turban. Jack now let go the long tom and struck the Prow low enough to greatly slacken their long Arab rifle fire.

Just then Old Baba got a bullet through the fleshy part of the thigh, I called on Belle to keep low. I will for Old Babas sake she said. The other dow now opened up and Jack warmed her deck up with a shot directly through the cabin and another one through the deck house. We were out of danger range now but they kept on after us so I zigzaged and kept a nice distance for Jacks long toms, which now pounded away first on one dow then on the other and from what I could see if the government launch did not hurry up they would be hors de combat. It was a grand sight. Just then the mate called Buck who was acting doctor to see what was the matter with the cook who was lying down bleeding profusely from a bullet wound in the left shoulder. Dr Buck examined him and had him carried down below and then fixed him up with what my medical chest contained. In a while he came up saying the poor fellow was badly hit but was gritty and had said nothing. We had several of the crew suffering from slight flesh wounds but all had been attended to.

Conversation

'I'm in somewhat of a quandary, Ma'am, *re* the disposal of Belle Seymour. I hope I shan't disappoint you if I have to change me mind about who gets the girl. Come to that it wouldn't matter so much from a literary standpoint. A bit of a surprise at the end is all

for the good, George Bussy used to say, whether love or war.

'Trouble is, if it's spectacular you're wanting there's no disputing the fact that the heroine ought to secure the captain if possible. Any interested reader'd expect it. And Jack Stanley having had one matrimonial chance with the girl at Doulton's . . .

'No, it'll not look well to leave the captain without a woman's love. No hearth to go back to, and so on and so forth. The fact that Jack Stanley has secured a pardon from the navy should be high light enough on him. And he can get back to that faithful girl painting her flowers and thinking of him.

'Aye, she can start and drop her brushes when the door opens. She hasn't made up her mind yet about caring for one of the Doulton's, although naturally she sees his intentions increasing.

'What's that, Ma'am? Buck Johnson? Excuse me if I sound severe, but there'll be no marriage between cousins in any novel of mine. *Plus* that, he's a strong figure can afford to stand alone. That's where his Indian blood comes in. Prop him up against the deck rails and never open his mouth, he'll still attract the attention. Indian features. Taciturn but nothing meagre . . .

'Well, when you're ready, you can just glance through and see how it's shaping. I'm leaving the love light to the last chapter, naturally. Going full

speed ahead with the fighting. Always topical, a good fight.

. . . . . .

'There you are, Ma'am! . . . I was nearly forgetting a message I have had from a friend in Kimberley. In the jail there for housebreaking. Wants to know if you couldn't say a word at headquarters. They've all heard that you got my pension for me.[1] Naturally they think that the reason that other feller was released from Pretoria jail six weeks earlier than normal was because you'd asked him to give an affidavit that I'd been in the same company with him in the Boer War. Gave him a look of respectability to be asked for an affidavit, so they shortened his sentence, it's commonly supposed, on that.

'Not a bad feller at heart, Saunders. Professional prizefighter when he was young. No faults – merely vicious.

'I'm not wishing to advise you too strongly, Ma'am but this feller at Kimberley asks you to do what you can to clear his character. Says he'll sign anything for a lady like you . . . Offers you half shares in the next job they pull off. And a tenner for meself.

'Oh, aye, his gang simply can't get on with their

[1] A Boer War pension of fifty shillings a month due to Aloysius Horn for his services in 'Kitchener's Cattle Thieves.' After more than a year's effort on his behalf to undo the knots in red tape, it was granted him in December 1926, but was automatically withdrawn when he left the country, in November 1927.

work without him. He's their best man at details, being a professional lockmaker. The only man can open a time-safe, and they're held up without him. Used to be at Nettlefolds or some other big firm at Birmingham. That's why he's such a good specialist . . . Experienced man . . .

'Half shares he offers . . . Not wishing to impose, and having his pride . . .

'Unfortunate part is, he'd only been out a fortnight when they caught him again. Their best man, and the rest of them held up for the duration of his sentence.

'Aye, there's nothing so irritating as to be in prison when you've planned out work ahead. Everything goes wrong. Look at that time in Madagascar. I'd just located a nice spot for . . .

'Oh, aye, that fort . . .

'Well, of course I could have got away . . . I could a' got away without being shot, once outside the walls. It was close to the sea, but if you hugged the lower walls you could get clear away along the beach. When you were right under it not a soul could see you from above – it overhung too much.

'Always shooting fellers in that fort. We never knew what for exactly. Latins have always had strange ideas of crime. Come and beckon 'em away at dawn and we'd hear a shot presently.

'Aye, the French . . . What with universal *maîtresses* and the culture of the moustache, they've forgotten

what real warfare is. Prefer to shoot bombastically at a poor lonely feller stood against a wall to seeing their enemy in bulk on the battlefield.

'Some nice fellers in that prison. There was that Swede. He'd done nothing worse than marry a Malagash, and they visit a natural action with the full penalty of the law.

'And there was an Eyetalian – he'd murdered a woman. You'll find that when a crime's committed by an Eyetalian it's generally based on a love interest. Being an impulsive race it's always easy to go a bit far in the interests of jealousy. What'd be a vile offence in an Englishman is nothing but a bit of extra tears and temper in an Eyetalian. Aye.

'Could make sausages, too, that feller. So what with one thing and another he got a lot of sympathy.

'A *sou* of pepper and a *sou* of herbs we'd buy through the gates to flavour them with. Well, naturally we all took lessons in the art the weeks before he died. And willing enough he was to teach us . . . The fewer the days left the more he sang . . .

Tra-la-la, la-la-la,
Bella Italia . . .

Beautiful Italy and so on, You know the sort of stuff they're brought up on. Young ladies in England used to like it.

'Aye, that feller enjoyed imparting his knowledge of

sausages to us. No doubt it was better for a condemned man than brooding alone in a cell. A human occupation plus human society puts a man in better fettle for meeting St. Peter than all this chaplain business. The aroma of herbs about his soul would sure be an attraction to anyone with a streak of humanity about him, heaven or elsewhere.

'This saying adieu one day to a feller's going to be called out at dawn is the worst part of prison life. Aye, you see a ship put forth that'll never return . . .

'I've always hated seeing a ship go out and me not on it. When you're on it yourself there's change. You're meeting the unknown whenever you commit yourself to the sea. But the fellers that stay on land – they can only go back to their little doings . . . 'Tis that makes you feel inferior to the feller being shot.

'Eight weeks in prison that time. And I might a' been there to-day if they didn't think I had strong backing in Lancashire.

'Put me on board and sent me to Lourenço Marques . . . And a note if you please to the Portuguese: "This is a dangerous brigand, he needs to be watched with care." About half a yard o' French they'd written about me, but that's what it simmered down to. A nice thing, to prejudice the Portuguese against a free man before ever he got there! Oh, aye, they tried to keep me. Got very excited . . .

'Naturally I asked for the British consul. He came

down to the ship and looked at me. He said nothing, we just looked at each other . . .

'An Irish gentleman, if ever there was one, Roger Casement . . .

'I could laff still when I think of *Monsieur le Capitaine* marching me down to that jetty. Brandishing his little sword and puffing and blowing . . .

'Aye, but a good chap! France has sure got one gentleman to her credit. Justice where justice is due – I take off me hat to *Monsieur le Capitaine*.

'Well, Ma'am, I'll be bringing you the lovelight next week, and that ought to be nearing the climax. I'm glad you think well of the fighting. A knowledge of sea tactics is always useful wherever Providence has landed you. Down your enemy and escape with the booty was a good enough motto for Lancashire for many a long year and it'll not fail you on the East Coast either.

'Lancashire! 'Tis the old armoury of England where the fighting wits are kept. But when all fighting is degenerated into a long distance competition by machinery there's no place for the old Lancashire families to stand with dignity. And when the natural living on the foreshore's forbidden to its ancestral owners . . .

'You've got to roam to be a gentleman. You've got to roam or you might give way to the temptations of commercial piracy'll not even respect the honour of a ship. If a feller wants the luxury of committing a dishonest transaction, he should be allowed to fight for it

with his hands or other intimate weapon. There's surely some redemption in fighting'll not be allowed in the ultimate to office fellers can commit murder and piracy with a stroke o' the pen.

'Aye, "My hand and seal" never brought about such terrible crimes as an office pen can undertake in secret.

'Well, Ma'am, we're nearing the finale now. A regrettable word but has to be faced, whether in literature or when you're beckoned to the Ultimate.

'And that reminds me – I've no wish to insult your capabilities, but shall I see those viking lads in print before I'm called? I'd – I'd like to a' seen those lads o' mine in print . . .

'The truth is I took a fancy to 'em, being Lancashire bred . . . They sure whiled away a few hours of *stultus* on a Sunday. But when the furore's gone you think it never was. You can't trace it in the brain any more.

'Oh, aye, I'm trusting you to know what's *best* . . . But can't the printers do my viking lads first? There are times when they seem closer to me than my notes about my rivers etcetra, Hatton and Cookson and so on . . .

'What's that, Ma'am? The printer's not made a start on that *yet*? . . .[1]

[1] This conversation took place when Volume One was being completed and not long before I posted it to London (October 1926). I never ventured to tell my colleague how long it took to edit a book, still less what it meant to hunt for a publisher, for fear of discouraging him. The viking lads (i.e. *Harold the Webbed*) were at this time lying in untidy piles in my desk, not a word yet typed.

Myself: 'Perhaps they never will, Mr. Horn. You must remember a publisher has to read a book first to see if it will pay him to print it. And although I think it a good book yet others may not. You must be prepared for failure. And then . . .'

'Never you mind, Ma'am! Don't you say a word about that. I've taken a few twists and turns in me life, and if this is another that's not leading over the mountains I can sure go on battling out a bit longer. Oh, aye – I'll tighten me belt and take to the paint-box if necessary. But if you'll excuse me, that elephant you're wanting me to paint eludes me at the moment. Come to that, a dog's head'll sell just as well in these offices. Always topical. These little typewriters and fellers with collars and so on're not wanting to buy an elephant. And the reason why, is they think Africa's bounded by the glass door and the so-called elevator.

'Well, I'll be getting along. Must buy some postcards pending me ability to paint a picture. I've got a few left here, if you'd like to see 'em . . .

'Look at that for a bit o' stultus! So-called pretty, it's the acme of the inane. That's why I can sell it easy here. And here's a comic. Go down in London, but wouldn't raise much of a smile in Lancashire. Too old-fashioned.

'Now don't you worry yourself, Ma'am, about the printer. You can't do more than your best. And if my

recollections're going to be submerged in failure it'll only be Kismet raising a forbidding hand.

'Aye, but Kismet hasn't deprived me of sitting in this sun on Monday mornings. Bit of a rest from our house of sorrows to let the fancy dwell on those villas across there and talk to somebody who's wanting information . . . *Plus* willing to pay for it.

'Well, here's to *au revoir*.'

Chapter xvi

Belle now came up behind me as I was at the foot of the mast watching operations. She was excited what do you think of my first two shots on the green? Splendid I said and if its Paka Pasha was hit you made £10,000 in one shot. She smiled and I said I think Belle that shot deserves an offer of marriage. She laughed slightly and looked at the deck for a moment. Your Jocking Captain she said. Oh am I I retorted I'll dare you to say yes. I will if you like she replied in a coyish way. I gave her a kiss and said putting the glass to my eye Wait till we get through with this fight My girl and I'll give you some more. If Im your wife Im half captain she replied with a love lit smile, so lend me those glasses and let me help you. I handed her the glasses and she took my place. Just then without notice from anyone the big launch left a boat alongside, she had four long boats in tow full of armed Tars. As she passed us the Captain who I plainly saw was Captain Sykes cried cease fire Capt please and passed on to the dows who fired on him immediately he came within range. He answered them from two small machine guns and left the four boats close to the big Dow still keeping up both rifle and machine guns on both the enemys vessels.

And now we had a grand sight, a sea fight in excelsis. The Tars were on the dows in a giffy cutlassing right and left whilst the Arabs fought back with their curved cimitars with desperate courage, but it was all over in less than fifteen minutes. The Tars won the game.

A small steam launch now came up, with a Doctor. He examined Baba and he was immediately transferred to the launch as was also the cook. The cook the doctor said was seriously wounded and he had a chance only of recovery whilst the old man needed attention as blood poison might set in otherwise he was not seriously wounded. The rest of the wounds the crew had received he said were only slight flesh wounds and were trivial. He parted in a hurry for the Big Dow. He passed us again in a while with many wounded and as he was close to us we saw Parker he looked quite white and death like but I could recognise him. Belle looked up to me, she could see me studying him. Its all fair in war she said, looking me straight in the eyes. Yes I said, a good job your shot was a lucky one she squose my hand she was full of affection.

Buck now came up and shook my hand warmly and so did Jack. We all drank to our luck and to our engagement, I told both Buck and Jack. It was quite legal if I married myself as ships captain if I had two witnesses. But of course I would let the commander marry us if he was willing as it would look better. Buck agreed to this and so did Belle and Jack. Its my Job

said the mate and ran below for the log book. He duly entered the marriage and we raised our hands following the Book of Marine instructions we all signed the log and Jack made out the marriage lines in legal form. We all signed it. At the ceremony the crew stood around and I felt as happy as a big sunflour. I felt a woman who had risked her life for me on my own ship was surely fit to be a rovers wife. And I felt proud of my wife and Schooner and Proclaimed it.

We were all in a happy mood after our several trials and troubles. And we all voted a twelve months Honeymoon, a trip around the world, Oklahoma included. I offered Jack half I had but the good soul refused and it took us all our time to persuade him to accept £10,000. I then offered to share with Buck, Oh no Belle said he is one of the family and can have our bottom dollar any time. We all shook and drank on it. Jack had the boys wages made out and we paid them double in honour of the wedding, not forgetting £50 for the cook should he recover.

The wind commenced to freshen and the good *Omoru* commenced to do a wedding march, the good ship seemed as anxious as we did to be off on the wedding tour. After a while the big tender passed us with a load of the fiercest looking Arabs I ever saw, Prisoners of course, many of them were chained. I held up a small letter I had scribbled, but the officer cried that he would be returning immediately. Buck produced

his guitar and we wiled away the time. I told Belle to get herself ready for the wedding as the commander of the Squadron knew my folks as well as he did his own and would do me a favour I was certain. She walsed down below and came up looking all sunshine, she really was a beauty.

The tender came off and the officer in charge told me he had all my accounts made out and handed me two long envelopes stamped H.M.S. *Decoy*. The first one contained a cheque for £10,000 duly signed by the Squadron commander. Buck and Belle were to receive recognition through Washinton D.C. whilst Mr John Stanley Naval Reserve retired with a pension. We all smiled I told the officer I wished a personal visit with the commander. He acquiesced immeditaely. My wife waited my return. I found the good commander in chief the Hon Wm How all smiles as usual, I entered we drank at his bidding I lit a cigar and we immediately had the stag hounds this time chasing a young grey antler threw North Lancashire away to the trough of Bolland, I now changed the conversation by asking if he would kindly condescend to do me a great favour. Anything possible of course only too pleased. I told him flatly I wanted him to marry me I explained matters truthfully, his smiles broadened as I went on. Only too pleased to join the Old time honoured Fist and Spear with a Cherokee, and said as he leaned over The luckiest event can happen on a ship is a True Sailors wedding.

He touched a bell and walked with me to the companion ladder.

I went off in the waiting tender. Belle stepped on board and I gave Orders to Jack to follow and, as the wedding would only take a few minutes Belle asked me how she looked the midshipman and sailors heard it and smiled and in a very little while we were on board the Man O War. I introduced my wife to Commander How we gave our names in full these were entered by his secretary sitting near and my marriage certificate being handed to me the secretary retired. Commander How drank our health and handed me an Ivory card Hon Wm How of Daynes Dyke Yorkshire on the bottom he wrote the following words Always Welcome. I thanked him and he helped me out saying Certainly a sailors Honey Moon. He conducted me to the tender and we soon boarded the Good *Omoru* and set sail at once, Frisco bound. As we passed the *Decoy* the good commander standing on the bridge uncovered and three deafening cheers rang out for the *Omoru*. We kept our flag dipping and the Fighting ship answered us till we could see her no longer, and parted for the Jolliest Honey Moon in the memory of sea rovers.

Conversation

'Well, Ma'am, here's me wind up of the story. It all came clear in the end.

'All this entanglement of individuals made me a bit

nervous at one time, but when I got an incentive a little more regularly I soon began to sort 'em out.

'You may have to look back here and there for a bit of modification . . . Better not report too closely what was said in the consul's office . . .

'Fairly excited he was, though . . .

'I'm glad I let old Baba have the letter from home. Well, naturally, he *felt* it . . . After the life he'd led, too . . .

'I've been regretting at times that Belle Seymour had to shoot that feller Aderley. She should never a' done it, I can see that now. But when Kismet leads you up to an event there's no getting away from it by a turn of the pen. Wouldn't be natural, Come to that, Nature and Kismet're one, rightly understood.

'I'm glad I got that bit in about Belle Seymour feeling a natural emotion at the sight of the Cross. Naturally affected she was. Aye, the Cross is the chord that joins a million hearts. There's a sensitive chord in every heart that'll vibrate to one touch only. And when the world, through the eyes of Belle Seymour, looks down upon the cross on the breast of that navigator's lady in her tomb it'll sure experience the same pang of reverence. Aye, the book'll be on a higher level for that incident.

'Well, I've killed off Effendi Parker as a climax to his career. Killed off or mortally wounded – I've left it to the discretion.

'Went out as a drummer boy, Pasha Parker. Deserted at Kasalla and joined the salvers. He'd let his divers get the loot off a wreck and then he'd disappear 'em.

'Ma'am? Well, naturally, in case they might betray the fact he was a wrecker. You can see the necessity.

'He'd a fine harem, that feller. One of the best judges of slaves and women on the East Coast. I've told you he kept a blue-eyed Georgian on the Chesterfields . . .

'Aye – while he regulated the slave trade on the high seas . . .

'Come to that, the wrecking of the *Empress of India* did *him* no good in the ultimate, brutal as it was.

'Ma'am? *Dates?* . . .

'Excuse me sounding somewhat impatient, but I'd say my book is built on facts, not dates. Founded on as much truth as fiction would allow. It'd be the height of idiotcy to weight a novel down with dates. George Bussy used to say no man of letters ever burdened his head with dates, as such. Leave that to the clurks.

'You hoist this book before the public and they'll take it, without all the dates and datum being mechanical. When you're here there and everywhere for seventy years you can't be as neat as a lawyer's ledger. A man's got to choose between being a bit o' nature and being chained to the office calendar.

'I should like to a' done something a little more

spectacular for Buck Johnson – seeing he was the feller bought me boat from me I went out to Peru in. The one I stocked with the guns from the old store shed.[1]

'Aye, he sailed her over from there. Needed her for his profession. Did well out of Mexican dollars one time . . . A handy feller, Johnson, if his scruples'd been kept a bit more polished.

'But come to literature, a feller like Buck, Indian blood and so on, is easy to manage without always putting a pistol in his hand. A determined feller, though quiet. One o' those fellers'd turn Mahomedan if necessary. 'Tis an easy getaway to be able to say a simple portion of their creed . . . I was very devout on the Koran. I got as far as the second lobe . . .

'Oh, aye, one o' the few places left in the world where creed can kill or save. The religion of the Arab's still a living creed that hasn't yet to take its last stand under a priestly petticoat. In full use in a world o' men!

'Not that I was ever driven to it . . . I'd – I'd snap the sign o' the Cross under any Mahomedan's nose, given me weapons were in good order! And that's a thing you might often be called upon to do, round about Guardafui . . .

'Guardafui . . . A fine-sounding word, but it was made for use, not beauty. "Beware the false light" it says . . .

'The first light you see coming from India or up the coast from Zanzibar. Aye . . .

[1] See Volume Two, reminiscences of an old shipping family.

'Those wreckers can imitate anything in the way of a light, outside the heavenly bodies, so called. Make 'em with old ship's lanterns they've stolen.

'Naturally a fifth o' the booty belongs to the Mahomedan church.[1] If it isn't Church it's State that levies taxes on the brave for the use of all stay-at-homes.

'That girl Elizabeth was no better, for all she lived in Merrie England. A fifth to the crown of all profits arising naturally from the seaboard of Lancashire.

'The viking's always been the king of wreckers. What with his half-moon formation and the storm of arrows winging death, 'twas not such an unmanly habit as the preparation of false lights by these Islamis.

'Born wreckers, though, Somalis. But I'm sorry to say I've seen a Liverpool man amongst' em. A vulture scenting the dead is no surer an apparition than the nose of an Englishman where there's loot to be had. Whether it's called opening out a country or buying a bankrupt stock of boots and shoes in Leicester, 'tis all one instinct.

'Salvage is loot, too, I'm not denying it. If I hadn't been a bit faddy over me friends I could a' returned to London in luxury with what I made round about the Persian Gulf, etcetra and so forth.

'Oh, aye, I could a' been rich if I hadn't been too choicey at the dictates of religion. I'd get his dhow from a Mahomedan but I'd never attack a Roman.[2]

[1] The Editor is not responsible for statements made by Mr. Horn.
[2] Roman Catholic.

'Not but what I should a' been chancy with me pickings, same as with any money I've had *in extenso*.

'Aye, what's caught by chance flies by chance.

'Come to that, if you look at it without bias, 'twas in the way of wisdom to be friendly with those wreckers. When you're in the salvage profession round about those parts it doesn't do to have them for enemies. No etiquette about it. Doesn't do to be as choicey in your acquaintances as if you were in residence in Hyde Park like me auntie.

'They'd – they'd always beg for some to be left . . . Any boat I was getting at . . .

'Well, naturally. And as a *quid pro quo* I'd do a bit o' stealing from them when they weren't looking.

'Fortunes of war, as they say. But it'd be nearer the truth to call it a war between fortune seekers.

'Aye, I've had me chances there and not always taken 'em. If I had I wouldn't be here, exciting the philanthropy of lady visitors to our house of sorrows.

'The fact is, whatever your principles may lead you to do with commonhood like those wreckers – *you can't rob a gentleman*. I'd as lief rob me brother. A gentleman's manners protect him, same as a child's. The natural armour of innocence, that's what.

'And that's what K – Pasha was. Aye, when he came along with his shipload of holy relics, plus carrying the

Church levies from Zanzibar, I could a' had him easy. Good Mahomedan family and Oxford bred, nothing could a' been easier.

'Nice feller . . . Breed'll always shine through, like these X-rays through the bones.

'Got into trouble with his boat and wanted a tow. 'Twas tempting to any man of imagination, but we let him go. All we got out of it was two hundred and fifty pounds each for towing him to port. Two hundred and fifty pounds each – *plus* the look of a gentleman in your face, and you not wincing from it . . .

'He'd been collecting the levies for the Mahomedan Church. Zanzibar and other places – and taking the holy relics round to various churches. A task always given to a man of high birth and breeding, and that's what he was. Friendly to one and all.

'Oh, aye, it would a' been a notable capture if I could have brought myself to it . . .

'Sometimes when I wake in the night and hear that Major D – sleeping off his methylated I have me natural regrets over booty I let slip for a whim of the conscience. But regrets never found me a meal yet.

'I had me chances, too, when I escorted the Sultan's daughter on her bridal voyage to the Persian Gulf. Going as a bride to one of the Mahomedan princes there. Aye, she travelled in state, with a retinue of fifty eunuchs. I remember I had some trouble in

getting the requisite number together[1] . . . Plus women slaves . . .

'Grand loot it would 'a been. The jewels alone . . .

'Oh, aye . . .

'But if it's piracy or anything else it used to be done in a gentlemanly way. Now nothing's safe. What with machinery and one thing and another, the so-called personal note is ruled out, whether in trade or ordinary life.

'These office fellers want to seize every penny. You'd not catch one of them sparing a gentleman just for the luck of it.

'Come to that, it would never a' paid me to betray a confidential trust like that. Might a' lost me permit to act as second admiral to the Sultan. Collecting his dues and tithes from Arab traders and so on. But he never called for me accounts after the first furore of the idea left him.

'I might a' been doing it still if one of my men hadn't opened fire on a British gunboat by an unfortunate mistake . . .

'Oh, aye, I used to wear a suitable bit o' gold braid in those days . . . Tax collecting is always easier when you're dressed for the part.

[1] Many months after this conversation took place Mr. Horn told Dr. Lewis the further detail that, having found forty-nine eunuchs and being at his wits' end for the fiftieth, a 'schooner-rigged Irish feller' (i.e., a down-and-outer) desperately consented to fill the vacancy.

'Guardafui . . .

'Any Liverpool man'd feel at home round about Guardafui. Lancashire men of my day were illiterate, but put 'em on the sea and they were learned men. Comfortable as a king on his throne and taking fair and easy to command. The king of wreckers, the old viking . . .

' "Look out for the man with the long moustache," the French used to say . . . None of my family have ever been able to grow one of those puny little French twisters. If you're a true web-foot the moustache'll always take a downward course.

' "Look out for the yellow moustache," the French used to say. Aye, and the Somalis were not coming closer than necessary either.

'Looking back, I can see that God always gave my boat a protective [protected] quality. All feared it.

'Why, the sea'll hurt a gull's back as soon as it'd hurt me!

'Ma'am – if I'd never left it! . . .

'The south-easters were something fearful in the Gulf, but they spelt harvest for us. Grand pay we'd get when the weather was bad.

'We were a fighting boat as well as a tug. Got a few guns fitted up below. Used to get 'em out o' me grandfather's old junk in the storehouse. He was never one to throw a good cannon away or put it on the lawn for ornament's sake.

'Oh, aye, in those days you had to keep your eyes skinned for piracy. Come to that, if you had anything of value you could always sling it overboard in emergency. Go back for it afterwards if you'd taken your bearings mathematically by some mark on the coast. You get a big bunch o' corks and anchor it securely to the private papers or money or what not you're wishful to save. An easy matter to return for it.

'The French are more easily duped than most nations The reason being they don't *think* deep enough. All for show, *revanche* and so forth. No *thought.* Less duels and more contemplation of Nature'd make 'em better revenue officers – if they could only give themselves to it.

'Come to the African coast as such, I knew quite a lot about the coast of Morocco too . . .

'Laffably stupid they can be . . .

'Aye, me and the unusual've been blood brothers more than once. There've naturally been occasions when I could waft a prayer of thankfulness to the skies for me Catholic up-bringing. A Catholic can always get *back* . . .

'He can get *back* . . .

' "Though your sins be as scarlet . . . wash me and I shall be clean . . . Purge me with hyssop" . . .

'Aye! But whatever me so-called sins, I've never disgraced me upbringing by writing a hymn about it to

hood-wink the Great Onlooker – same as that slaver you told me about that was a parson[1] . . .

'He's seen me! He knows the worst, which is what no one else ever will. Why should a feller fear man, that can never know what's known above? And when he's nothing but a Latin . . .

'That slavery feller was a complete scandal to humanity. A proper disgrace to his sex, which was that of a clergyman.

'Grand fellers like my Renchoro . . . Hundreds of 'em stowed away below in dirty darkness that've known nothing but sunshine on their bodies . . . Homesick plus seasick . . . Crying and weeping while that feller sings hymns on the deck . . .

'Excuse the language, Ma'am, knowing that he was of your Church, but the man had a bloody soul a pirate'd be ashamed of exhibiting. A bad feller, ought to be burnt in effigy.

'Come to repentence, the priests of the older Church never depend on hymns for good results. What's

[1] I had told Mr. Horn something of the life of the Rev. John Newton, who wrote 'How sweet the name of Jesus sounds.' Captain of a West Coast slaver, this gentleman carried on his trade both before and after conversion. As captain he conducted divine service twice every Sunday. After he had finally left the sea he wrote on one occasion: 'I never knew sweeter or more frequent hours of divine communion than in my last two voyages to Guinea.' I should like to acknowledge the source of these interesting facts but have forgotten the name of the writer of the magazine article from which I had it.—(ED.)

pretty poetry, made up by some feller scratching his head for a rhyme, to do with something heavy you've got on your chest? Only a doctor can get rid of it for you, and that's the priest that's been trained to the operation.

'Aye, we can get *back* . . . "Though your sins be as scarlet . . . Wash me" . . .

'Ma'am, I must be going. Me thoughts were elsewhere for the moment . . .

'Do your best with this novel of mine. Whether imaginary or not it gives visions that are true.'

Odd Conversations

I THE LAKE CHAD ROAD

II THE WATERSPOUT

III THE MARCH OF THE PRISONERS

IV THE WANDERING JEW AND OTHER MYSTICAL MATTERS

I

The Lake Chad Road

'Tired? Go to *bed*? . . .

'Now, Ma'am, to-morrow I'm off to England. You'll not be driving me to bed like a child, shall she, doctor. You stand up for me.

'Excuse me suggesting it, but if you've got a finger or two of that special whisky you had out the other evening we can keep Christmas a bit here. Taking a month by the forelock. There's an hour or two yet till midnight.

'To tell you the truth that's what I'm feeling like. Apple-snatching . . . the peace-egg . . .

'It's not every day you can go to England after eleven years with brand-new luggage and a millionaire's wardrobe.

'I've left many a good portmanteau in African ports. Travelling on the contents of me pockets . . .

'When you've got to think of a getaway you're not too anxious for showy luggage all over hotel labels. Leave that to these so-called tourists'll do Africa in fourteen days with a watch in one hand and a timetable in the other.

'*Ikorna* tourists . . . They'll not catch a glimpse of Africa that way.

'Africa's like a wild animal – you must move quiet and watch if you want to see the real thing. Leave your alarm clock at home and step out into the blue for a year or two.[1]

'Ma'am, when I see all this paraphernalia I've got to travel with now to show me literary success in the eyes of the world, it sure gives me a bit of a pang.

'Aye, it gives me the measure of me age and weakness to feel that I can't turn me back on it and be off . . . All these trappings and fine clothes . . . What are they but the signs of finis?

'Oh, aye – I'm feeling me feet in the swamp now. Same as the old elephant . . . The day comes when he can't pull clear.

'He can't pull clear . . .

'But they'll not steal me memories from me. When I'm feeling the cold over there at Christmas I'll have to warm my bones with sunshine thoughts of Africa.

'Equator was never too hot for *me* . . .

'And look at the Lake Chad Road. Region of greatest heat, it says on the maps.

[1] It is extraordinary how, even on a ten days' sojourn away from railways, Africa asserts itself. You forget to wind up your watch and are content never to know the day of the week. For days read years and you may get some notion of the reason for Horn's complete haziness as to dates.

'Oh, aye, the Lake Chad Road . . .

'That's where you –

'Come on, doctor! It'll be freezing cold when I land on Christmas Eve. Let's talk while we can think about it with a little natural geniality . . .

'That little corner of the Libyan desert is a spot can't be avoided when the caravans are travelling from the Red Sea . . . To Timbuctoo, etcetra and so forth . . .

'Well, naturally they avoid the desert as much as possible—carrying rich merchandise of carpets and jewels. Spices and so on, plus the sacred women. Destined for the harems of the western confines of Mahomet.

'All that mountainous country back of the Cameroons . . . A lot of Arab chiefs in and about those fastnesses and their supply of holy women naturally has to come from Arabia. Round about the Persian Gulf . . . Surrounded as they are by native Africans, they have to send far for their wives.

'Months on the way, those poor things. All across Arabia by caravan, then shipped across the Red Sea and join another caravan to get across to the central and westerly parts.

'Oh, aye, the Lake Chad Road . . .

'From immemorial times the highwaymen of Africa've waylaid the caravans along that road . . .

'What more natural? See 'em coming along in the

moonlight there – a grand picture of Eastern riches, same as in Bible days.

'Aye! The West'll never beat a panorama like that. All your Jubilee processions for Victoria through the streets o' London, volunteers *and* regulars,'d not hold a candle to a natural apparition like that . . . A hundred camels and more moving soft and proud across the desert sands. Loaded to heaven and the loads swaying like ships on a heavy swell . . . And not a sound but the bells to announce all that commerce . . .

'Something that satisfies a feller in a sight like that. Aye, you feel as if you'd caught the circus up at last. Could seize your fill o' staring – which is what no Lancashire lad was ever able to do so long as he remained at home.

'I can tell you this, doctor – no Long Tom'll ever be able to destroy the pride of the East. Why? Because the desert sand and Mahomet are brothers born. If man was made from dust, the Arab rose from the dust of the desert. Ancient as Abraham, that sand . . . Sifted and shifted for three thousand years, and it's still the same. It'll never betray Mahomet to the West until they can provide Long Tom with camels' feet and a top-dressing of camels' sense.

'What's that, Ma'am? The *air*? . . .

'No gentleman'd do such a thing. Drop bombs on delicate veiled women? What a rumour! The League of Nations'd never allow such an outrage. Puny

as it is, it's suitable enough for the protection of women.

'Plus that, the whole eastern hemisphere would conjure up an armed protest.

'Oh, aye. So far the East has only spoken in its sleep, a voice here and there . . . When it wakes up and rubs its eyes there'll be a proper reign of terror in the world. A little co-operation plus novelty in firearms and they'll be proper world beaters.

'Come to that, the East'll never be beaten by the West until Mahomet wears trousers and the women drop the veil. There's strength in secrecy. Drop secrecy and the world'll fall to pieces of its own accord. Isn't Nature the biggest secretmonger? Aren't all her roots and plans underground? And what's that for but for safety?

'Secrecy plus dignity . . . There's neither one nor the other in a pair of trousers. Or a bowler hat . . . All this European dress . . .

'I remember dropping me bowler in one of the baths in the Sultan's palace in Zanzibar. Comical appearance floating on the water. Something laffable in a bowler hat. And never more so than when floating in one of the Sultan's baths. Pretty affairs they were in those days, like Roman baths sunk in the floor in our school books . . .

'Aye, it takes Piccadilly to support a bowler without a smile.

'Ma'am? Well, I happened just to be walking through to an audience with the Sultan. Had to hand over the taxes collected on the high seas . . .

'Ma'am? Well, I've told you I've been second admiral to the Sultan one time. Naturally I had to do something to earn me living and me title. Excuse me if I'm too sharp – the plain truth is you've forgotten.

'My official duties made it necessary for me to collect the Sultan's levies on the high seas.

'What's that, Ma'am? Well, naturally, any foreign vessels within a certain radius'd have to pay a levy to the monarch of the Mahomedan race. Plus pearl fishers and ships after mother-of-pearl. And any suspicious feller carrying slaves he couldn't account for in plain English. Or any other contraband . . .

'I've told you I had a proper uniform when on board. Official notebooks in Arabic, all nicely signed and a pencil on a string. Double entry and so on, and the Sultan's name on 'em . . .

'I had one or two Mahomedan friends on board, if the truth were known. Lent verisimilitude to the undertaking. Naturally we all behaved as Mahomedans when we heard the *muezzin*.

'*Plus* the taxes, we collected all the news for the Sultan. Come to that, we secured information for the British Admiralty too – until that other feller made the mistake he did . . .

'I've a sincere admiration for the British Admiralty.

Finest detectives in the world. And I've been in Scotland Yard that breeds 'em.

'Oh, aye, we could 'a gone on much longer if it hadn't been for that . . .

'Those telegraph wires, too. When *they* came, there wasn't so much for us to do in the news line. For that matter no telegraph'll ever come up to a bit of personal information.

'What with telegraphy in Africa and so on, there's not much left to turn a hand to, and on the top of that some o' these philanthropists 're trying to make us swallow prohibition, and that'll lead to deeper trouble.

'The Mahomedans don't drink, but look what a number of wives that leads to. There's always a hidden danger in prohibition. They're frightened after dark, too. A great fear of ghosts among the Faithful. A race that never knows an incentive gets timorous.

'I collected taxes for the Queen of Madagascar, too, one time. Easy enough to pick up a bit of officialdom when you want to seize a living. Nothing cheaper for an outfit than a bit of red tape.

'Second admiral to the Sultan . . .

'Some dignity in an appointment like that – especially when you carry a small cannon for necessary occasions. Crew well armed, of course, in case of resistance.

'But we never had much trouble in getting in the taxes. We could generally bluff 'em about the radius. When a feller's ship's held up at sea he gets naturally

flustered. Couldn't tell you off-hand what the mileage is to the shore.

'Aye, I might've been doing a congenial task like that for years if it hadn't been for my partner firing on one of the British navy in mistake for a leviable vessel. It wasn't too clear at the time, or he'd never have made the mistake he did.

'Ma'am? . . . Well, of course the Sultan wasn't much of a hand at arithmetic. But if we took a thousand pounds or so on a trip, we'd never enter less than a hundred to his credit, easy as it would 'a been to deceive. There's some fellers'd 'a taken advantage of him, but a gentleman like that – European culture and so on – well you feel you can't go too far.

'Of course, come to high seas. there's much'll go unrecorded . . .

'Well – you know what I mean. High seas and so on . . .

'But when you think you've caught a slaver bound for Arabia . . . And you see the pitiful faces of the young boys . . .

'Spoilt for the sake of preserving the honour of a harem of women . . .

'Such pretty lads – and by an infamous outrage against nature condemned to grow fat and soft as women . . .

'Eunuchs, doctor! I could give you a – I must give a blast to Mahomet or those lads'll haunt me! . . .

'Slim, fine boys. They look at you with shame, and

you can't help them by word or deed to avoid the future . . .

'I'm sorry, doctor, the Missis has muddled me somewhat with her questions. All over a bowler hat, too . . .

'Bowler hat . . . Bowler . . .

'Me clue's gone!

'What's that, doctor? The veil . . . Caravans . . .

'You've got it! Coming along in the moonlight . . . I'm on the spoor again all right . . . Camel tracks in the sand . . .

'Aye, the Lake Chad Road.

'At one time I had a notion of taking some Pangwe fellers of Matama's tribe right away from the Pangwe border into that country back of the Cameroons. Work up towards the Lake Chad Road . . .

'Oh aye, we led some of those French soldiers into some peculiar situations. In a defile when they couldn't spot who was potting at 'em from the rocks . . .

'There's more than me had to move away from French rule on the Coast. Making trade impossible, what was a feller to do but battle out for himself? If for nothing else than self-respect . . . There's quite a number of Englishmen 've had to don the fez for private political reasons in that part of the world.

'Some day I'll get a bit into a story about a feller that had to ride all night on a camel at top speed and drink the poor thing's blood in the morning to save his life . . .

'Be a good title for a story –"The Lake Chad Road."

'Peculiar things happen on the borders of Mahomet's country. Whether you're a white man or a native, it's best to don the fez. More sensible.

'And for other reasons, too. You don the fez so that you can be given one of the sacred women when they're captured – that is if no ransom comes for her.

'Well, naturally you'd go to a little trouble about it. You've got to forswear ham and eggs, and not let the tears spring to your eyes at the smell of bacon. You've got to maintain your dignity in the presence of a bottle of brandy. If your mouth waters you'll have to swallow your emotion quietly. You've got Arabs watching you at first, until they begin to trust you. It's in the ports you're likely to get caught. You're off your guard and a smell catches you . . .

'Keep to the veil and forswear European dress, and the East'll never be subdued to Western ways of thinking. But over and beyond that it's their dignity'll preserve the East from Western contamination. The races that don't give way to agitation at the approach of alcohol'll yet rule the world. The feller that can wake up with all his wits alight at a sound in the night'll be top dog in the end.

'I'm not saying it'll be a happy solution of the world's difficulties. Mahomet and the millennium 'll never be partners.

'No finer feller in the world than the temperate

Anglo-Saxon. He could have the world at his feet – but he's risking it all for a bottle in the cupboard.

'Oh, aye, you feel your handicap when you live with the Arabs. Whether wine or women, they can absteme from temptation better then any clergy you could name. And that's a power comes from religion – not what society'll think of you, same as with us.

'Religion's the biggest influence in the East. It can do with less churches and temples than any Western religion you could name. Why? Because Mahomedans are not dependent on some feller in a pulpit for their religious feelings.

'Those sunset prayers . . . What is it but the Angelus of the desert . . .

'You could always make the sign of the Cross secretly when you bowed down to the earth with the others . . . Same as in the *pueblos* when the bell goes.

'Come to that, what's all religious feelings but a bell in the heart? Didn't my Renchoro join in my prayers when we were lads together? And if he could a' heard the Angelus he'd've understood it all.

'What's idols on the West Coast but bells for those poor fellers? Spirits and voices of terror – they've not learnt anything soft yet like the Virgin and Child. But they could – same as Renchoro did. And better for them in the ultimate than following Mahomet. There's no gentleness where there's no mother and child. No relaxation . . .

'What's the voice of the *muezzin*, so-called, but their notion of a bell? You hear it and the heart is softened at the notion of a God.

'An Arab'll be three months' journey in the desert from the nearest mosque, yet he'll not forget the voice calling him to prayer same as our Angelus.

'A bell's the biggest totem in the known world. More power in the air than in the solidest idol. No church or chapel could last that didn't have bells to search the heart.

'A religious feller, the Arab, that can carry his religion across a thousand miles of sand and still hear it call to the Faithful. Those sacred women were kept in dignity and chastity after we'd raided a caravan. Especially those with gold slippers, the important ones . . .

'Oh, aye, a lady of importance on her way to Timbuctoo . . .

'The chief'd take 'em up to his place in the mountains and they'd have to wait there until they were ransomed. Beautiful tents they had and courteous attendance. Rich carpets and silk cushions and slaves . . . What with all the caravans he'd looted there was no Arab prince lived in better style.

'Of course if no ransom came after a certain lapse of time . . .

'But the Chief'd wait for months before they were handed round to the Faithful. Naturally selecting the

best for himself and his high-up friends. But any man wearing the fez was entitled to pickings so long as he hadn't intruded on any lady that was awaiting a ransom.

'That Mahomed Alie was a fine feller. No hole and corner thief. You'd not get *him* demeaning himself to do common housebreaking, same as in London. He needed adventure fit for a man and a gentleman – *he*'d never 'a sat doing unofficial piracy in an office, whether here or in London.

'Me and my natives were useful to him in guerilla warfare. Come to that, it paid me to have the protection of his name. Well mounted and armed as his men were . . . Never short of a fine horse . . . His property in camels alone was fit for the merchant princes of the East.

'I wasn't the only Englishman engaged in brigandage under him. There was an old Yorkshireman with a beard. Tomlinson . . . Thomson . . . I forget the name. We called him Jack for convenience. Been a sailor and a trader up and down the coast, but he wore his fez natural as a bird wears feathers. Married a young Arab girl . . . Settled down to the domestic life of Mahomet as if he'd never lived in Birkenhead or walked into a Liverpool shipping office.

'Come to domestic life as such, there's more scope in a place like that. Back o' the Cameroons . . .

'Aye, on the Lake Chad Road there's no little gate with a number on that'll betray you with a click. The tent and the desert sand . . .

'Quietude, that's what. You make your exits and your entrances with no more to-do than a cat or an owl.

'It's the quietude makes life go like a dream. The natural mystery of the desert that'll never be destroyed by this so-called civilization. Trams and busses and so on . . .

'What's civilization but child's play – a toy horse he's got to whip faster and faster? The desert 'll survive all faddy notions brought about by civilization.

'Oh, aye, there's a lot o' natural secrecy in the desert sands. But it's not much use when you're courting a girl, whatever advantages it offers after you've entered the marriage state. Victoria with all her governesses was never so religiously guarded as a young Mahomedan girl. You'd never hear of a little lady of the desert tipping the wink to any man she fancied, same as Victoria beckoned to Prince Albert before all the world. Nature provides her with a natural delicacy. *Plus* a watchful mother, couldn't 'a been bettered in Nina's joss-house for viligance.

'There's Arab settlements here and there in those parts. Tent villages in the shelter of the mountains.

'Naturally you have to talk about the weather to the mother, same as in England. You'll not get a kiss before the marriage day. That's how that Yorkshire-man with the beard secured his young wife. Had to go wooing her before he could get her. Solemn as a registry office with the door shut, although nothing

more than a tent. There you sit, trying to conjure up some polite nothings while the mother watches you over the edge of her veil.

'All that quietude – you don't seem able to seize small talk, same as Lancashire or London. The fez sure weighs a bit heavy when you're trying to impress a mother and daughter, with nothing more than about fifty words of Arabic at command.

'Two pairs of eyes staring at you. When the mouth's hidden it's a riddle to know what they're thinking. Not too pleasant to think the young one may be laffing at you . . . However obedient she's going to be, her laff's her own behind that veil. And for anything you know the mother may be hiding a sour twist of her lips as well.

'Arab eyes have to learn the art of expression beyond the dreams of what the unveiled can do. These actresses, so-called, ought to qualify in an Arab tent before they go on the stage. Especially these cinema experts – they've no notion what can be said with the eyes alone.

'There's not many situations'd nonplus a Yorkshireman that's been all about the universe. But all he could do was to smile his thoughts at the girl's eyes and give a suitable bow of deference now and then to the mother. No natural progress when the mother's there every time. A proper ceremonial wooing that'd shame any Piccadilly drawing-room. English girls, haut ton *or* clergy, are regular demi-mondes compared with that young Arab

girl behind her veil. Glancing so pretty at her mother, like a foal trotting back to the mare for company . . .

'Isn't there more attraction to the male sex in a bit of natural modesty than in the disgraceful spectacles you'll see in a civilized town? Bare arms, and too much bosom display . . . Short skirts and so on. Their antics and ogles attracting the disgust of well-bred native lads that're used to seeing modest native women half naked and no remarks made. Until they get dragged down to the level of a smile at shameless white women . . . And then they're lost, poor fellers. Next thing is to drag native girls to the same level.

'Oh, aye, treasure's always the rarer for being a bit inaccessible. The jeweller's window doesn't lure a man that's been a prospector. He'll conjure up more excitement at the notion of a bit of diamondiferous rock than at the sight of any Cullinan or Koh-i-noor spread on white satin for common eyes to stare at.

'Old Jack . . . Painful as the wooing was, he was allowed to marry the girl in the ultimate. Taught her the sign of the Cross as a sop to his religious conscience. Combined holy matrimony with religious instruction.

'Ma'am? Well naturally, I've told you before he was R. C. – just like meself, although a Yorkshireman.

'Come to that, there's more scope for adventure if you belong to the Older Church. You go further because you can get back. There's a door'll never be slammed in the sinner's face . . .

'Aye, you can get back! . . . What did that priest say last Saturday? They're glad to see the wild'uns, he says, up there.

'I'd been thinking hard thoughts about me brothers that were priests, so I went to get rid of 'em. Amassing money that should have been for the benefit of kith and kin. For conscience's sake they leave it to the Holy Church . . . All these speculations and so on they couldn't keep their fingers from.

'Come to that, if they amassed money against the dictates o' conscience, am I any worse that've got a memory full of roaming and adventure for me only fortune? Full as their moneybags . . .

' "They're glad to see the wild'uns," he says, "in the ultimate." Aye, and human nature'll make a brave effort to get past St. Peter. There'd be no saint more susceptible to a man that's seen the world.

'Thank you, doctor – four fingers up's about my mark. Four or five . . . That's how the vikings used to measure the sun. I've given you that bit of information, Ma'am, in me webbed boys, you remember[1] . . .

'I suppose there's no news yet of the printers making a start at it? I'd like to see those lads flaunting their pranks before the world before I cross the divide. It sure was a bit of a relaxation from the Golden City . . .

'How'd you like me to conjure up a story about the

[1] Volume Two.

Lake Chad Road? It'll do me good when it's too cold over there. Warm meself on the sands of the desert . . .

'We'll call it " When the Sign of the Cross Beat Islam." A bit o' religion's always topical. Makes a snappy title.

'I could work in a lot for you, Ma'am, if you think it'd be useful. Don't you think it'd be a popular notion? Naturally we'd add a bit o' fiction to it, for reality's sake. People mustn't know too much.

"Look at the desert scenes I've seen there – wouldn't take much to turn 'em into fiction. There's more market for these so-called novels than there is for the truth. Aye, you've got to vulgarise the truth for the sake of office fellers think all the world's a cinema. They'd want to spoil the quietude of the desert with their silly notions. I've seen pictures of 'em outside the cinema doors here. A house painter's outfit spilt over them for effect! Coarse, that's what.

'Ha! But what they can't do is to make a truthful picture of those caravans coming along in the moonlight . . .

'Old Jingle-Bells! Old Jingle-Bells, pacing along in the moonlight there. Walks delicate as an ostrich and turns his head like a snake . . .

'The leader of the caravan. Knows the outline of every hill and mountain, same as you know your own doorstep. Been marching that route for twenty years, same as his grandfather did in the time of Moses, and

he steps out like an emperor. "Follow me!" he says, "I know where I'm going."

'Draws the caravan after him smooth as a snake can travel. That's how it looks when you're distant enough. Or a train . . .

'The locomotive of the desert, that's what that learned old camel is. Mind you, he'd never get along with your S.P.C.A.[1] and so on. He prefers a driver as hard as himself, or he'd scorn the feller.

'I've seen 'em running with a calf and the Arab'll push the calf aside and drink himself. A little old fellah with a few thin camels – I saw him treat 'em like that. A hard race, the Arabs.

'Come to that, the camel and the donkey've made Africa, North and South. The pack-donkey made the Golden City and he gets nothing but kicks for it. These millionaires and other foreigners're no better than the Arab, if the truth were known.

'The prospector's friend, the pack-donkey. Look at the Abyssinian donkey, too – runs like a racehorse. Munches sticks for a living and goes without water as long as a camel. But the camel needs desert country to show his cleverness. He's awkward amongst rocks and vegetation. Lakes and so on're not the scenery he's accustomed to.

'Did I ever tell you I rode a camel all night once when I got into trouble with the French? Rode him

[1] Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

all night in rocky country . . . I hadn't eaten for two days – had to kill the poor brute for food in the morning . . . Worse than Abraham and Isaac – betraying the poor feller . . .

'I got away with the help of a native friend of mine. Son of the King of Bonney.

'That was when I was prospecting for chances of opening a road right through Mahomedan country. For trading purposes up north. Skins and copper and ivory . . .

'Oh, aye, when the French became impossible to live with on the Coast, a lot of us old timers went up to Nigeria for better luck.

'A good many Mahomedan brigands in the country between. Kept their eye on my little outfit of armed natives. I saw 'em once, watching the French troops trying to pot us off across a ravine.

'Later on it came natural for me to join forces with one of the bands. It suited Mahomed Alie to get the asistance of a white man and natives, same as it suited me to see a bit o' desert life and seize me living from it.

'I'm fairly conversant with the camel. So-called the ship of the desert. One of the makers of Africa, same as the donkey. But the donkey'll take anything in his stride. Better for transport than the camel. Aye, it was a statesman's thought when de Brazza introduced the donkey to West Africa.[1] Fellers whose fathers had seen

[1] See Volume One.

droves of a thousand elephants fighting for eating-ground, ran from de Brazza's donkey corps.

'Two herds of elephants at war . . . The old Pangwes had often seen sights like that up behind the German Cameroons, before you skirt the desert. When the elephants were moving from north to south . . . And the females'd stand on one side for the bulls to fight for the ground. An apparition of prehistoric force not yet belittled by the brain of man.

'Camels! . . . You've got to see a caravan in the moonlight to seize the beauty of it. The desert moon's the grandest in the world. Picks out the hills and gaps like a blue picture of a landscape, and from between two of 'em the caravan comes by surprise. Your heart jumps to see it, same as the circus'll give you a pang.

'Old as Moses, that Lake Chad Road. Not a sound but the bells, and the moonlight picks out the metal like spots of silver.

'That's all you'll see at first. A moving shadow picked out in spots of silver and the sound of the bells.

'Talk of a picture – piracy on the high seas is a common affair after you've seen a caravan held up. But you've got to harden your heart to break up that panorama with common violence. Helpless in the peace of the desert, and only man to shatter it. A veritable betrayal of Nature, that's what.

'When it comes near and you see the camels' pride

and knowledge of their duties, you sure feel a pang at the thought of destruction.

'All that handsome commerce . . . Took innocent business men a year to think it out and amass all that merchandise.

'The destruction of a big enterprise'll always weigh heavy on the mind of any feller born with natural feelings. Not like stopping a coach or a train that's only been running a day or two . . . It's a human enterprise. Some poor feller's venture that'll never come to fruit and can't be replaced – and he'll be getting no telegrams to tell him so.

'Of course if the caravan was a strong one we'd not always attack, especially on a clear night. We'd act like protectors of the road if they seemed too strong for us. Step out and hold a parley and get paid for our good services. Nothing worse than those old toll-bar notions of the old days. Nothing but a simple road tax in return for protection from brigands. A grand bit of fun, that, and no harm to a beautiful spectacle.

'Nice change, too, for the veiled ladies – the tedium of the journey being relaxed for an hour or two. They appreciate an admiring glance from a stranger when they've been cooped up on a camel for a few months. They'll stare out at you with sincere interest. Gazelle eyes and so on . . .

'I could work that up easily in a book. "Gazelle-eyed they watched the strangers with pretty alarm."

'*Ikorna*, alarm. The plain truth is, they like the natural interruptions of the journey. A little persiflage of the eyes with a stranger'll be a tonic to any girl . . .

'A lady of importance on her way to Timbuctoo . . .

'And very grand she may be, gold slippers and all. But female nature being what it is, a little relaxation is acceptable even to the *élite* of the harems.

'Come to that, in a proper attack you can always give the veil a careless twitch when you're lifting 'em down from the camels. They'll only scream half-hearted in all that mêlée. The truth is, they like it, same as Mary invited Boswell[1] to steal her.

'You've got to figure out the tedium of a journey like that – only the desert to look at in all those months and no picture books or a newspaper to while away the thoughts. You can't blame the poor things for enjoying their terror.

'Come to terror, it'd frighten any woman when the caravan's attacked under the cloak of a dust-storm. Nothing but shouts and shots and agitation. A complete surprise, nothing less. The biggest spectacle of confusion.

'You don't attack a big caravan unless the wind's right. Aye, you come down on 'em with the wind. In the night, when they'll be sleeping with their backs to the dust-storm. That ensures the fact that when they

[1] Bothwell. See Vol. Two.

struggle awake to face the enemy they're blinded with the sand blowing in their faces.

'Just in that corner of the Libyan desert . . . Always with the wind behind us, but a sand-storm was ideal. The camels bowing to the storm and the drivers with their heads covered . . . Everything covered up.

'If the wind blew from the south we left the hills and attacked. Naturally in a spot where there was loose, sandy soil. Talk about smoke screens! . . . A well-chosen spot in the desert that responds to a hurricane provides one of Nature's best screens.

'They'd be bound for Timbuctoo. Come safely all the way from Persia or Arabia, those sacred women, and be held up at the last lap.

'We were sworn in never to touch or molest, and we always kept our word. Handed 'em over to Mahomed Alie and he'd treat 'em like his own daughters. Give 'em the benefice of his protection while a ransom was being sent for. Whatever pickings there were you'd have to wait for good and proper until all hopes of a ransom had died away.

'All this so-called desert love and so on you see on the cinemas . . . White women struggling for honour and so on. Those fellers know nothing about it! Any struggle a woman has in the desert she's brought on herself by her behaviour *plus* her likings. Safer there than in some of these offices of the Golden City . . .

'Naturally an Englishwoman wouldn't be as safe as

a daughter of the Faithful. But there's a natural reserve in Arabs, due to their religion,'ll keep a woman safe just as long as she'd like to be.

'A girl'd be better in the hands of Arab brigands than in the streets here. Of course if she insisted on a dress to her knees and her bosom somewhat too visible, there's no knowing . . . But an Arab'll always respect a lady. He's not conversant with these little typewriters, etcetra and so forth'll dress like the *demi-monde* to attract the attention.

'Come to that, a young feller has purer thoughts in a cannibal tribe than in the streets of civilization. Where nakedness is natural there's less secret wickedness eating into the conscience. Natural as Nature, and a lad'll take no harm in the ultimate. It's civilization breeds secrecy and secrecy breeds the maggots of uncleanness. The vision that a young feller sees is a lasting impression, but the good'll last as clear as the bad. And clearer, when you're getting into age . . .

'Oh, aye, there's wickeder places than the Lake Chad Road, come to comparisons . . .

'We made a good living there until we got caught by the Senussi. The loot was equally divided. No complaints about that. Fine carpets from Persia and so on, might have sold well in London, but were no use for anything in a desert bivouac.

'Of course we weren't entitled to the women. Those that weren't ransomed were sometimes sent on to get

the highest bid in Timbuctoo and other places. But there'd be pickings in the ultimate for a white Mahomedan. I could make you a story, Ma'am, –

'What's that, Ma'am? The Senussi? . . .

'Aye, those are the fellers that finished us. Rushed down on us one night, same as we used to surprise a caravan.

'Seasoned fighters, the Senussi. They're religious, so they're fierce in a fight. When a knife's edged with religion, it's as good as jealousy for a killing motive. They influenced the Touaregs with their religion. All fierce fellers – distributors of news from Mecca. Couriers of the desert on their swift horses. Catch up the news from the last of the mosques on the desert fringes and spread in all directions in fierce bands. Being fanatics, they'll spread the news like a fire over hundreds of miles of desert country.

'These so-called newspaper reporters, with their telegrams and bicycles . . . No edge on 'em.

'An Arab horse carrying the holy news is shod with the wind. A veritable miracle the way news flies in desert country.

'Aye, when Mecca rules Africa . . .

'Africa for the Africans, the American negroes say. What's more, there'll always be a few Moses characters willing to lead them back to the Ju-ju tree and the sacred parrot. Nothing worse as a shrine than what they're up against in the States.

'When civilization gets yeasty and flows over the edge of the cup, there's nothing worse, come to barbarity. Nothing for it then but to begin again in a simple state of nature. Like when you've lost your way in the wilds you've got to retrace before you can make any further progress.

'Africa for the Africans is what the black man'll cry when he's a bit stronger. But the white man's there from all quarters of the Old World, a pack of wolves all got the same cry. Howbeit some of them are more gentlemanly than others about it, the cry's the same and it's "Africa a white man's country."

'*Ikorna* white man . . . When the pack's got nothing further to seize they'll turn on each other. Nothing so voracious as the man with land hunger. They'll commit cannibalism on each other, same as the wolves, and then it'll be the black man's turn.

'Africa for the Africans he says . . . Ma'am, if you'd seen a feller like my Renchoro you'd laff at these puny politicians quarrelling *re* the illustration on a yard of bunting.[1] You'd cry it with him, as like as not. Haven't there been black fellers leading an army to notable deeds same as Alexander? Aye, and there will be again. But only if we can stop that feller from Mecca. "Africa for Mahomet" is what *he's* making a song about. And how's a mixed rabble from Europe

[1] An allusion to recent disputes between South African politicians about the design of the new national flag.

to shout down a battle-cry like that, been ringing over the East for a thousand years? What can those innocent black lads do against experienced wickedness waving the sword of the Faithful? There's ancientry there! . . .

'When a sword's edged with religion it'll take more than a few shiploads of American negroes to seize Africa for the black man. For pure savagery the forces of civilization're nothing when pitted against religion. It's not the white man he's got to reckon with – that could be arranged in time, seeing that the white tribes never agree. It's not the colour of a skin he'll be up against – it's the figure of the Prophet *plus* the shape of a scimitar . . . Straddling across the desert there and his feet standing firm on the map of Africa for all puny religioners to play between . . . Reading their Sunday Bibles while Mahomet whispers interesting everyday information in the black man's ear. Plurality of wives and so on . . .

'Mind you, the native'll never know who his worst enemy is until it's too late. He listens to the tenets of Mahomet, same as he'd listen to a bit o' natural sin on a Saturday night, poor feller. That's what catches him! What he doesn't see is the reverse of the medal – slavery and mutilation for young black lads while it's only Arabs'll get the sacred women on earth and the houris in Paradise.

'Ma'am, if these so-called missionary societies don't

pool their weapons and their titles and become plain Christian warrior same as the Crusaders, there's no knowing what'll become of Africa. Unless the Christian churches protect the native from Mahomet there'll be no free Africa for the Africans. Nothing but slavery worse than any of these Uncle Tom Cabin notions.

'If Abraham Lincoln could get himself agitated over a few simple castigations in the Southern States, what would he say to the wicked cruelties of a slave-trading country? . . .

'British Government trying to stop it? Ma'am, excuse me smiling. It's not the Admiralty but religious totems'll rule Africa and the East. Whether Cross or Crescent . . .

'You'd be tempted to think the churches had turned to the politician's tricks – hide your holy eyes from a wrong when it pays best not to see it. How can Africa be a white man's country unless the natives're decimated by slavery plus all the unmentionable diseases allowed to flourish in the land of Mahomet?

'Mind you, the Bedouin's the finest feller in the world bar his religion. But I sometimes think the Great Onlooker will be apt to forgive us that in the ultimate.

'Mahomet and Christianity'll never pull together, howbeit we're all sinners in the eyes of heaven. In China, now, there's both Buddhist and Christian. The two religions interweave very agreeably. Both of 'em

being religions for gentlemen, rightly understood. Aye, there's more harmony between Anglo-Saxon and Chinese than between English and Mahomedan. An Anglo-Chinese *entente'd* lay the foundation for a reasonable world.

'Those Chinese're strong because they still have reverence for ancient institutions. Same as my Pangwes. What could they inherit of pride in the race only from their travelling poets? Some black troubadour feller that taught them history. Hereditary troubadours, that taught 'em history *plus* the imagination. Could history ever have come down to us except on the fiery wings of troubadour song? What's history but loose bricks until it's built into shape by singing fellers?

'Aye, 'tis what he receives from his own is what matters to man! From savagedom upwards. Civilization can do nothing for him unless he's protected from it by tribal pride learnt from the tribal teacher.

'Oh, aye . . .

'I've lost me clue again. An incentive'd put me right again, doctor, if it's all the same to you. Just a pick-me-up without water. Call it liqueur for fashion's sake.

'What's that, Ma'am? That story? . . .

'I could soon weave it out if I had the time. I'll make one of those white Mahomedans steal old Jack's Arab wife. Quite a young thing she was. Of course they'd been acquainted some time. But when the Senussi came down and our band got dispersed and

some killed, Jack can get a shot in the head will finish him off. And Lancashire'll get the girl!

'Well naturally she had some of the rudiments of education, after living with a Yorkshireman. Could make the sign of the Cross, and say quite a good deal in English.

'I'll make him say to her: "There's three tons of ivory and pickings over those blue hills, lass. And it's German territory . . . But how about the others," I'll say. "Your husband's killed and no one left here but me" . . . She'll simply throw her arms round me and say "Oh, aren't we lucky, Jack?"

'Aye, I'll make him say to her "There's three tons of ivory and pickings over those blue hills . . ."

'All right, doctor, all right. I'll go to me last night's sleep in the Golden City. Dream of England, home and duty . . .

For England, home and duty,
For England, home and . . .

'Me voice is a bit thin to-night . . .

'Well, here's to a long *au revoir* in the morning.'

II

The Waterspout

'Excuse me mentioning this wineglass, Ma'am. Without wishing to draw attention to its emptiness this stem calls my memory to the shape of a waterspout.

'Talk of visions! There's ways of forgetting Sunday nights in the Golden City when you've seen what I've seen. Live by a lake long enough to see the birth of a waterspout and you'll forget all little Bolshevists and their mothers. You'll have seen something the gods could stare at. A gigantic play of the elements.

'Aye . . . All day long you see little African devils[1] twisting their skirts about. Several of 'em, same as if they were reconnoitring. Spying out the weather, same as we used to tap the barometer. Then along towards sunset comes a bigger one, spreading out a bit of a roaring whisper with the twirling of his skirts. And the roar grows louder. Then if luck has it that he ventures on the water you'll see the grandest battle between the lake and the clouds.

'The devil moves smooth as a ghost over the lake. He's exciting and teasing the waters by his circular

[1] A local name for the 'dust-devil,' or moving column of dust.

motion until they seize hold of him. Then he rises to escape. He draws them after him to a common centre, whirling higher and roaring louder when he finds he can't shake the clinging water from his knees. He's reaching for the clouds – but they'll follow! Aye, the so-called laws of gravitation'll be forgotten for once. When they rise clinging to him, you'd think all the lake's bound to follow, roaring after the feller they've got hold of. The water's sucked from the banks – all the lake's one convex curve that reaches up to the column that's making for the clouds. No thunder and lightning, only the great roar of the wind and the water whirling together in space . . .

'The natives run about distracted. They don't know where that great weight of water is likely to fall. So they run in the opposite direction to its passage on the lake.

'The column whirls up – an aspiring cone, a beautiful shape – and joins the clouds in another great curve o' symmetry that's held in place and spread abroad by the weight of the clouds. Spreads out like a tree-top. One o' these flat pines . . .

'The natives get terribly distracted, poor things – they're at the whim of Nature at play.

'Aye, the waterspout . . . Rises like a goblet of the gods, full o' cloudy colours. Not truly transparent – more like a twisted movement of all the primal colours inside that smooth stem of water. Talk of Venetian glass! . . .

' 'Twas this empty glass made me think of it. This base being the lake, and the stem rising in a smooth hollow to join this upper mass we'll label the clouds for convenience's sake. Only this cloud was full o' wine instead o' water . . . And bending here and there . . .

' 'Twould surely be a fine cloudburst! Red wine in a ponderous mass and balanced on the nose of some old denizen of the lake. Very precarious . . . An unnatural process that's bound to collapse, being a reversal of the law of gravitation. And down it comes! The colour fades away into solid ranks of falling water . . .

'When it's all over the natives push out in their canoes and gather in the great harvest of fish of all sorts that've fallen from the sky. You can hear 'em shouting . . .

. . . . . .

'Ma'am? Oh, aye, I've got me chapter here . . .

'Those lakes have sure confounded me somewhat. Nothing but beautiful mementos of that side of Africa. But you've got to keep your eye on your overcoat where I'm living now.'

III

The March of the Prisoners

'Fine country up there on the Portuguese border. Barring the authorities a man could live there. They've got no notion how to behave to the natives, either. Clap 'em in jail for the most natural offences. For life, too. Leg-irons and weevilly food. Diseases not too polite . . .

'Disgraceful places, those Portuguese prisons. The Latins never moved with the times and their so-called women've never bred a lady like Elizabeth Fry to clear up those prisons with her goodness. An English lady of the best, being Quaker stock. No, nor a Florence Nightingale, neither!

'Aye, they're needing some grand woman like that to sweep out their hospitals. Little fussy doctors with their moustaches turned up. Nurses that'd make a Lancashire lass look rosy as a daisy for cleanness. You can always see when a Lancashire girl's washed her face and when she's been too busy to do so. And that's what you're never sure of with a Latin. Handsome eyes and the powder-box don't go far when it comes to battling with disease.

'Those little fellers on the border haven't got the sense to use their prisoners for labour, same as we do. And isn't it better than letting them eat their hearts out and rot their bones in jail? Put a criminal in the open and the influences of Nature plus the spectacle of passing humanity'll do somewhat more for his morals than keeping him in a dungeon.

'I escorted a detachment of Portuguese native prisoners one time. Over the border to the mines at X – they were going. Aye.

'Ma'am? Well, no, not exactly official. Looked at from one sense I should say the contrary. But nothing criminal in the matter . . . Oh, aye, looked at without bias there was nothing *criminal* about it. Poor fellers rotting there amongst their dirty crusts of mouldy bread . . . The murderers in leg-irons . . . And every one of 'em worth two pounds a head to any labour agent. Well, naturally . . .

'But great Prestonpans, any man that needed a little adventure'd a let them out for humanity's sake, let alone the money!

'Those Portuguese prisons . . . Bad enough anywhere, even for your own kith and kin. Might as well try and teach 'em Sanskrit as a bit of hygiene. But when it comes to native prisons, any man's heart'd protest that was a man. Life sentences, half of 'em. Insufficient food plus weevils, and no greenery to keep their skins pure.

'Oh, aye, I marched 'em along. Three hundred prisoners and six Portuguese soldiers. Feller that I'd bribed to let me have them – head warder, or *el capitano* or something, of the prison – had to let me have the escort. It looked better to the prisoners. Else they might have thought there was something underhand going on and been a bit nervous.

'Well, naturally they thought they were being sold to the British by the Portuguese Government for work in the mines. Escort of soldiers to assist in the transfer, and so on.

'Poor fellers . . . But I got those murderers' legs sweet after the first week in the open. I naturally had some simple medicaments and when we came to running water I'd call a halt and inspect the wards. Mountain water and old Sol and a bit o' God's freedom will go far to healing any wound.

'Over the mountains, by a secret way I'd had once from some native fellers. Hear those fellers sing when they found themselves once more with their face to the blue! Clean earth under foot . . . They'd laff at anything when we'd been out a couple of days, Natives march easy to their little lullabies and nursery rhymes. When you get a lot of fellers from different tribes it's as good as a brass band competition in Lancashire.

'When they got a bit more cheeky they'd be shouting their war-cries and fighting one another. But no real trouble. Too taken up with the novelty of it.

'Give a man all the change he needs and you kill strife. 'Tis only when humans are planted too deep in one spot that they begin to get fractious and open the way to war.

'Pretty to hear them at night over their fires. Naturally I wouldn't let them make fires too freely the first day or two, in case some Government feller should turn up on an inspection tour of the prisons and find the birds flown. But I soon stopped worrying about that. 'Twould never rob me of a night's sleep to be pursued by little fellers like that.

'More than a fortnight *en route* and I never lost one of 'em. All fit as fiddles at the end of it. Being a forced march as one might say, the commissariat had been rather on my mind. I'd packed up a couple of horses with a few bags of assorted weevil from the prison stores in case of need. Sort of mealie pap[1] it made. Tasted better under the sky than in a prison. No better sauce than new-found freedom – unless 'tis danger. After great danger the hunger's terrific. Aye.

'There's all sorts of viands provided by Nature for the hungry. Nuts and wild fruit and roots in the bush. It sure was some blackberry-party the minute we halted. Laffing and calling, and spreading into the bush. Some of those poor fellers must have felt as I could feel to-day if someone set me down picking blackberries in the old places I thought I'd never see again.

[1] Porridge of stamped Indian corn.

'Naturally I shot for them. Game in plenty, and if they didn't all have butcher's meat every day, at least I saw to it they had it in turn, one batch with another.

'There's one thing's easy with natives – a sense of justice 'll lick Christianity hollow. Christians are all for love, but justice is a more useful instinct, come to natives. They have an instinct for it and they're quick to spot it in others.

'More than a fortnight *en route* and I never lost one of 'em. They were in prime condition when I handed them over to H – in Rhodesia. He got two pounds apiece for them on the mines. And he gave me half of it. The six soldiers got themselves handed over too. Had enough of guarding Portuguese prisons. A bit of freedom had given 'em a taste for change.

'No great compliment to their Government that its soldiers are as lief to work half naked in a mine as to wear froggings and epaulets in a state of repose.

'Truth to tell I've sometimes wondered if H – used a bit of natural coercion or whether he frightened them into thinking they'd get into trouble when they got back. Being privy to the crime of theft plus *lèse majesté*.

'Oh, aye, 'twould never 'a done for those fellers to go back . . .

'H – was always a bit of an original at earning his daily bread. He's the feller went round vaccinating all the farms with condensed milk when there was that big small-pox scare. At two and six an arm he did very

well as a Government expert until he lost his nerve a bit and had to look for another little gold mine. Sixpence for the natives. We dressed in riding togs . . . Looks well when you visit a kraal . . . Leather cases and doctor's bottles and pricking outfit . . .

'What's that, Ma'am? Afraid to handle such a lot of native criminals with only seven white men? Excuse me if I say – one white man and six dagoes. Why, no – if you look at it with any preponderance of thought you'll see that the chances were a thousand to one against any ill feeling on the part of those black fellers. A man commits theft when he's hungry and murder when he's angry or afraid. Separate him from the time and the place and the incentive of the crime and you'll find him very much like other people. 'Tis being in a filthy dungeon keeps him a criminal, which in the course of nature he might never have been, only for a few moments of uncontrol that might happen to the best of us.

'Aye, 'twas some weeks before the theft was discovered. I heard about it from a chum of mine up there. Food coming in as usual and nobody to eat it except the new prisoners and they couldn't manage it all. I expect that warder feller made a good bit selling cheap weevils to the natives in the district.

'Oh, aye, when the furore did come and some inspecting officer finds his old and crusted prisoners gone and most of the cells empty, well, of course – *el*

capitano has only to bring out a forged document and pretend it'd been given him by the Englishman Horn. "Please give bearer three hundred prisoners and oblige yours sincerely the Governor."

'That *capitano* . . . "Jesu Maria! Could it possibly be that he was deceived by the Englishman?" . . . And cetera and so forth.

'Well, and who's going to trouble to bring three hundred black prisoners back to swell the population ? A bit o' correspondence and stamp licking always suits the Latins better than going out with a gun. They've got the knife habit seemingly, but it never goes so far as a bullet. Aye, the *sum summum* (?) of that route march of mine was a deal of official conversation and a lot o' manifestoes concerning the whereabouts of that Englishman Horn. 'Twas sure a pleasurable experience. Oh, aye . . .'

IV

The Wandering Jew and other Mystical Matters

'Come to that, there's as much variety in Jews as in Christians. They're not all half mad from the money-grub, which is what prevented Honest John[1] from being one of the *élite* of the race. Brave but voracious, John. That's a kink'll spoil any man, same as a cancer'll not respect race or creed.

'Look at that wandering feller I saw in Mozambique once. A proper Wandering Jew . . .

'Aye, but he had a look of Jesus about him for all that. Sandals and a long gown and so on, and carrying a tall stick in his hand same as a pilgrim in a picture.

'Used to live with the natives, whoever he was. Sleep in their huts and eat their food. Never carried money – and he'd come all the way from above the Lakes[2] on foot. Not a native or a cannibal'd 'a touched a man like that. They know a chief when they see one. Outside the ranks of the landed gentry it takes a savage or a peasant to know a leader at sight.

[1] An old prospecting friend. See Vols. I and II.

[2] Above Uganda.

'Name? If ever I knew his name I've forgotten it. There's some men can make you forget all puny considerations such as name and country. They belong to the brotherhood of universal goodness, and that's passport enough for St. Peter himself.

'Said he was looking for a place where the Jews could rest . . . Been walking down Africa and couldn't find a spot big enough to hold their commercial notions.

' "This would do for me," he says, "but I must find a place where *they* can rest . . ."

'Poor feller. Rest and the Jew've been strangers from immemorial times. Isn't every Jew a Wandering Jew? No peace for any man bitten by the money-grub. If you find a Jew that's happy you may be sure he's not rich.

'Poor feller . . . There he was, walking down Africa like that dove seeking land after Noah's flood. A home for the Jews he said. Come all the way from Palestine, receiving food and shelter, but without a coin.

'Panda, Mozambique, it was.

'I took a liking to that Jew. He had a grand face. Tall feller. Very fair for a Jew. Studious, too – didn't drink anything but water.

'He said Uganda was a beautiful country but it'd never suit the ideas of Israel to be too far away from commercial centres.

'There's fever-trees just about that spot where I saw him. Ninety miles south-west from Inhambane, on a

big road, you come to a small creek. And on the left of the road – the trend of it is west by north – you come to fever-trees. Upas trees, some call them. A sickly applegreen, a colour no artist could describe. Blotched effect. Painted by a devil's brush in deathly colours. The leaves are scarce – not much shade from them. What's more – excuse me referring again to the inferno – the branches grow with a devilish twist.

'You'll never find buck spoor near the tree and the birds are chary of familiarity. They'll not nest there or take a perch for a few minutes. When the tree dies the bats and vampires take possession of it. Seems to provide something congenial to them.

'What's more, you'll never get a native to camp near the upas tree. I've known prospectors lose some good boys that way. They'll not be forced in the matter.

'That Jew was a bit of a scientist – had a natural desire to go and examine the tree. He said he might find something good in it if properly understood. And that's why he wanted to scrutinize it. But he thought better of it for my sake. Said he didn't want me to lose me boys.

'A gentle nature, that feller. A man of thought and a man of God, and he was looking for a home for God's people.

'If ever a . . . What's that, Ma'am?

'Well, to tell you the truth I've sometimes pondered

on that meself. There's no knowing what a topnotcher like Jesus could do, once He gave a mind to it.

'Finding a home for the Jews . . . Didn't he say "Father, forgive them" when he felt the nails through his palms? One o' the cruellest places for pain, the palm of the hand.

' 'Twould be a suitable task for Him to be caring for them still. Especially if Heaven seems somewhat quiet to a feller knows this world and the doings of Nature.

'Oh, aye, there's more mystical events go on in Africa than you'd find in a month of Sundays in Europe plus America. There's room for the spirits here . . . Wandering Jew or Jesus . . . And who's to know they're not one and the same manifestation . . .

'Ma'am, there's more than humans manifest their spirits here. Look at that sable I shot once up in the wilds of the Transvaal, as it was then. Up on the Portuguese border. The grandest sable antelope I ever shot. Horns like towers he had.

'He'd led me and Pali a long dance, doubling and bounding enough to make you dizzy. But I got him at last in the shoulder . . . Fell at ten yards.

'He was such a grand feller, we stood and watched him before we made a move. They make you feel serious, some of these fine apparitions of Nature.

'He looked all ready for fading out o' life and then he seemed to think a bit and it gave him strength –

something he had to ascertain before he left this world that bore him.

'There's a lot o' physical energy to be got out of pure thought, rightly understood. That dying creature struggled to his feet like a man . . . came straight towards us, stepping slow and thoughtful. He came to within a couple of yards of us and took a long look in our faces . . . 'Twas all of a couple of minutes before he collapsed and died.

'Nothing so pitiful as the glazing eye of a buck . . . Tender as children they look . . .

'We looked at each other. Pali had gone yellow. Being no more than a Dago in origin, he was frightened. He whispers: "That was a spirit, Jack."

'Aye, if I'd felt no more than fright, I should 'a forgotten it. But when a dying animal of the build of that sable looks at you and says "*Why?*" with all the last gathered forces of his handsome strength, you'll not forget it unless you're lacking in all the spiritual make-up of a man.

'This making of a living, when it leads you to kill Nature's best, is no game for a gentleman. But those fellers've got no living to make are always the worst. Nothing but licensed murder'll satisfy their kind. Why, they've got no appreciation of character whatever!

'The brutallest act I ever saw was done by a shooting feller – a Major Somebody. A red-faced ignorant, whatever his fancy title might be. He'd shot a sable

antelope, a cow. And he kneels down and drinks the milk from that dying creature . . . A young one standing by, trembling and pushing against its mother . . .

'He gives it a shove out of the way . . . Stealing the last drops she could 'a given to a motherless creature.

'Aye, the young haven't the sense to flee from a brutal man. Their sole instinct is to trust to the mother. 'Tis when she's gone they learn humanity for the bitter thing it is.

'The helplessness of that little forsaken feller'd disarm any one save and except one o' these big game experts. Why – *he trusts you*!

'It's when you earn your living by the rifle that you learn moderation. Death should never provide a pastime for a gentleman, even if nothing more than a rabbit or a fox in Lancashire.

'When you live by the rifle your hand is often stayed by what you see. You get faddy about killing. Somewhat more of an epicure than these military men and such like. 'Tis watching their pretty ways puts crude slaughter out o' the mind. The human quality in the brute is one o' the seven wonders o' Christendom. 'Tis only when you get down to man – *animal quem vocamus hominem* – that brutality begins. All that precedes that is innocence.

'A sad provision of Nature that man is the best hunter. If only he'd learn to use his powers gently, like a man instead of a greedy lad . . .

'Man is the king of hunters. Walk an elephant down in five days. He's terrible . . . The brain of *homo sapiens* breaks the heart of the strongest animal. Aye, his heart's broken, elephant or bushbuck.[1]

'But if man had the sense he could use his brain-power to force their confidence instead of this wild terror. Man is so much stronger than the brute that he could compel their belief in him.

'Come to that, "A little child shall lead them" is no such fancy notion as you'd think from the pictures.

'There's a spirit in Nature that's not rightly understood by the common. Whether in Africa, when you're watching a big eland or a giraffe in the home God gave it, or a pheasant going to drink at a brook in Lancashire. 'Tis home to 'em and from that soil they grew, same as children from the mother.

Myself: 'You know what Blake says, Mr. Horn:

"The wild deer wandering here and there
Keeps the human soul from care."

'Aye! That feller knew what he was talking about, whoever he was! It sure brings happiness and peaceful thoughts to watch those delicate creatures, with their little tricksy hoofs. Like a lady's wrist . . . 'Twould be the greatest victory of man to make 'em trust us. And easy, too, where man and buck have a common enemy like the lion and the leopard. They'd easy look to you for sanctuary. If only we'd let 'em . . .

[1] The smallest of the antelopes, a miniature creature.

'That's a good bit o' poetry about the deer. Sounds easy, too – any natural feller could 'a conjured it up.

'Nothing like a simple song of Nature. *Il Penseroso* . . . *L'Allegro* . . . Fine smooth stuff, but it'd never make a tear fall for humanity's sake, like a little bit of a lullaby or a sailor's song when he thinks of wife and child. At school we learnt it . . .

'Come to that, I'd give all such fellers as Pope[1] and Dryden for a bit of reality. Nature . . . That's what we all spring from and what we've all got to come to. And those that never let go of her hand're the only happy ones.

'Watching . . . That's what Africa can offer to the world . . .

'That sable's clear as a picture in the brain. I've often got the animals in my eye that I've shot – the reflex of old apparitions get etched on the brain.

'There's another thing you'd never forget, and that's the dying of a rogue elephant . . . He's ranged up and down his portion of Africa for a century and more, same as a man'll roam the world for the rage of it. And when the moment comes and he's stricken by some unknown power that had an animus against him . . . when he thought the world was his . . .

'Aye, but if he only knew it, that old emperor in

[1] Mr. Horn is not confusing Milton with later poets. His memory or the classics read sixty years ago to schoolboys in the refectory is remarkable.

overalls that crashed down into the river was better off than if he'd gone one day to the morass to get water and got caught in the mud.

'No strength to pull free and you begin to measure the days till you're swallowed up.

'You sure look around you with a calculating eye, same as the fellers here when there's no work.

'Africa's one of the last spots on earth where Nature's at bay against destruction. That sable . . . Instructed by Nature, he steps forward, defying his last moments, and speaks for the mother of us all.

'The language of the dying eye is one you can't forget . . .

'Those sable antelopes . . . Their beat covers a radius of forty miles. But a koodoo'll take sixty. Regular tourists, the bucks.[1] But a lion'll stay years on one spot. A regular stay-at-home, with no natural curiosity like the buck to lead him into the blue. The buck and the elephant, now, they like to feel a bit of horizon beneath their feet.

'Only when mating the lion'll move from home. Oh, aye, he'll follow a wide circle as long as he has to hunt for the woman. But in times of peace he's a proper old maid for his own hearth. He'll go to one spot on the rocks for a week, same as the cat'll take a fancy to the kitchen dresser.

[1] In South Africa 'buck' is a general term for the great antelope family in all its branches.

'Those sables and koodoos're more like humans – adventure calls them, though timid.

'They can search your face like a human . . . "Try to understand me" he said . . .

'Horns like towers carried through the air for his decoration and defence. And we bring them down to the dust . . .

'Watching . . . Nature's watch-tower . . . That's what Africa will have to be, or not betray the mother of us all – in one word, Nature.

'If I had proper carriers . . . Could set me down in Africa . . .

'Old age is a morass. But there's no old elephant has the shame of dying under philanthropy, that's always ranged for himself . . .

'Cicero says the gods throw the mirage of youth over the old so that they may not be conscious of their pitiful surroundings. What is it but proof of the saying that whom the gods love die young? Aye, for every man that's not *homo stultus* they'll see to it that death seems no more than a pleasurable incident.

'If I wander away to the music of the harps and the drip of the paddles on one of my rivers I'll not be asking for any undertaker's melancholy to contaminate the body of a better man than himself. Come to that, I'd welcome the black pinions of the vulture sooner than the nodding plumes of the most expensive hearse.

'Death's a thing of dignity – left to Nature. No

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